NATION

Monsoon lull to last a week, rains by 23 June

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BUSINESS

TCS to take $70M hit as US Court rejects appeal

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SPORTS

Iran opens 'politically charged' game with draw

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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Ch'garh schools mandate Gayatri Mantra recitation

RAIPUR, 16 JUNE

The Chhattisgarh government has made daily recitation of the Gayatri Mantra and other Hindu prayers mandatory in all schools from the 2026-27 academic session, alongside the national anthem and song. The initiative aims to foster patriotism, discipline, and cultural awareness. The order, issued on 12 June, mandates activities at three times daily, including morning assembly, midday prayers, and evening sessions. Opposition Congress criticised the move, questioning why religious mantras were made compulsory, and accused the government of imposing RSS's agenda. Congress leaders stressed education should be secular, and recitations should remain voluntary. *—PTI*

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Mumbai cuts industries' water usage by 20%

MUMBAI, 16 JUNE

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has announced a 20 per cent reduction in water supply to industrial, commercial, and sports facilities, as reservoir levels fall to 10.35 per cent amid delayed monsoon rains. The civic body has also suspended water connections for construction projects and swimming pools. The measures, effective from Wednesday, follow a review meeting on water stocks in the city's reservoirs. The restrictions aim to safeguard drinking water supplies, with strict action promised against misuse or wastage. The BMC previously enforced a 10 per cent water cut from 15 May, as reservoir levels continued to decline. *—PTI*

Smriti only Indian in TIME's top 100 sportspeople

NEW YORK, 16 JUNE

Cricketer Smriti Mandhana has been named by TIME magazine among this year's 100 most influential people in sports, the only Indian to be featured on the list. TIME's list of the 100 Most Influential People in Sports 2026 features athletes, coaches, advocates and investors who are "people shaping sports today." The list, headlined by American basketball legend LeBron James, includes superstars from the world of sports such as football icon Lionel Messi, Chinese-American skier Eileen Gu, tennis star Carlos Alcaraz, basketball player Victor Wembanyama, legendary golfer Rory McIlroy among others. *—PTI*

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India blocks Telegram to plug NEET paper leak

No Telegram till 22 June; PlayStore drops it

NEW DELHI, 16 JUNE

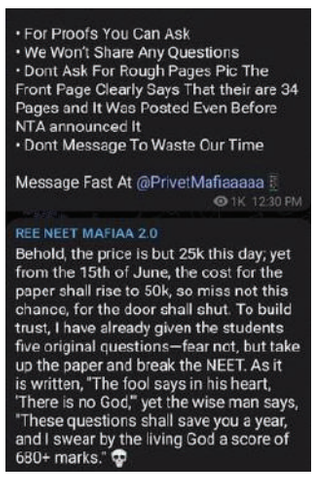
The Centre on Tuesday temporarily restricted access to the Telegram messaging app ahead of the NEET-UG 2026 re-examination, saying the move was aimed at curbing cheating rackets and misinformation.

The restriction, imposed under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, will remain in force until 22 June, covering the 21 June re-test. The government has also directed Google to remove Telegram from its Play Store, with Apple expected to follow suit, sources said.

Telegram has been ordered to disable its message-editing feature in India until 30 June to prevent the creation of fabricated "paper leak" evidence by editing old posts while retaining original timestamps.

National Testing Agency (NTA) Director General Abhishek Singh said the move was preventive and not prompted by any actual paper leak.

The NTA said organised cheating rackets had been using Telegram channels and bots with names such as "PAPER LEAKED NEET", "Re-NEET 2026" and "Private Mafia" to dupe candidates by promising access to question papers in exchange for money **(in pic)**. The NTA said the platform-level restrictions were a "measure of last resort" after channel-by-channel action proved inadequate.


• For Proofs You Can Ask
• We Won't Share Any Questions
• Dont Ask For Rough Pages Pic The Front Page Clearly Says That their are 34 Pages and It Was Posted Even Before NTA announced It
• Dont Message To Waste Our Time
Message Fast At @PrivetMafiaaaaa
1K 12:30 PM
REE NEET MAFIAA 2.0
Behold, the price is but 25k this day; yet from the 15th of June, the cost for the paper shall rise to 50k, so miss not this chance, for the door shall shut. To build trust, I have already given the students five original questions—fear not, but take up the paper and break the NEET. As it is written, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God,' yet the wise man says, "These questions shall save you a year, and I swear by the living God a score of 680+ marks."

However, India's move drew criticism from Telegram founder Pavel Durov who said that the leaks will now be "just moved to other apps". "This punishes 150M+ Telegram users in India, not the insiders who leaked the exam materials," he said. Internet users criticised the ban, calling it a "band-aid solution" to tackle a much larger problem of exam fraud. *—PTI*

> **Can't stop paper leaks, ends up blocking Telegram. Blocking Telegram totally isn't even possible; Telegram is designed in such a way which easily allows people to use proxies and other methods of circumvention**
>
> —Nisarga Adhikary, ethical hacker who exposed CBSE's OSM row

> **Just because a COMMUNICATION MEDIUM has elements of misinformation, we have decided to shut it down. Doesn't WhatsApp have elements of misinformation? Doesn't the Indian press?**
>
> —Sarthak Siddhant, student who exposed CBSE's OSM row

Donald Trump, Narendra Modi and other world leaders at the G7 Summit, in France's Evian on Tuesday *—ANI*

Hell will rain down on Iran if it gets nukes: Don at G7

ÉVIAN-LES-BAINS, 16 JUNE

US President Donald Trump warned on Tuesday that "all hell will rain down" on Iran if it attempts to develop, purchase, or otherwise acquire a nuclear weapon, as he discussed an interim agreement between Washington and Tehran to end their war. He made the comment on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Evian, France as Day 1 of the meeting got underway.

Trump added that the preliminary deal, which US Vice President JD Vance said was digitally signed by both sides earlier this week, "says it loud and clear. They're not going to develop it. They're not going to buy it. They're not going to do anything with it. And if they do, they suffer unbelievable consequences."

He said that he only agreed to sign the document after Tehran agreed to the terms.

Trump further said Tuesday that America will not invest money in Iran after a Memorandum of Understanding was agreed with Tehran.

"We are not investing any money in Iran, by the way, and with that rumour got out there yesterday was ridiculous," he told reporters.

Trump also claimed he "never cared about regime change" as a goal in the US-Israeli campaign against Tehran. He did say however that the elimination of many Islamic Republic officials effectively amounts to a regime change.

"... we're dealing with people that I think are very rational people. They were nice to deal with. They were strong people, smart people. ... they're not radicalized and they're, you know, looking to help their country," he said. *—Agencies*

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Modi & Trump meet for the 1st time in 16 months

EVIAN-LES-BAINS, 16 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump exchanged pleasantries and held a brief conversation on Tuesday at a gathering of G7 leaders, marking their first in-person encounter in 16 months amid continuing strain in bilateral ties.

The two leaders shared a warm handshake followed by a short conversation. A full bilateral sit-down is slated for Wednesday on the sidelines of the gathering. They last met in-person at the White House in February 2025, weeks after Trump's second inauguration.

The relations between the countries witnessed a major downturn after Washington imposed punitive tariffs on India and President Trump made controversial assertions regarding his role in de-escalating the India–Pakistan military clashes last May. Washington's new immigration policy and its decision to increase the H1B visa fee also contributed to the slide in India-US ties. Last week, the relations came under fresh strain after three Indian sailors were killed following the US military's attacks on three merchant vessels off the coast of Oman.

In their meeting on Wednesday, the two leaders are expected to take stock of the ongoing negotiations for the bilateral trade deal and steps being taken to boost defence cooperation, including energy security, the West Asia crisis and the Russia-Ukraine conflict. *—PTI*

PM Narenda Modi shakes hands with US President Donald Trump at the G7 summit on Tuesday France's Evian-les-Bains on Tuesday *—PTI*

Is road-making rocket science? KBG fumes

Krishna Byre Gowda in his first meeting as Bengaluru Development Minister discussed pothole-ridden roads *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

BENGALURU, 16 JUNE

Krishna Byre Gowda took charge as Bengaluru Development Minister on Tuesday and held the first review meeting with the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA). He lashed out at officials with pothole ridden roads.

He said the focus should shift from repeatedly filling potholes to preventing them in the first place.

He fumed at officials: "People ask why potholes are not being filled. I'm asking why potholes arise at all. Is road-making rocket science that we can't build roads that don't frequently develop potholes?"

Gowda said Bengaluru's administration had become trapped in a cycle of repairing recurring damage instead of ensuring quality construction. "If we do substandard work, it leads to potholes and we are forever in the business of filling them. It is like chasing your own tail," he said.

Stressing that Bengaluru, home to around 1.5 crore people, needs a better quality of life, the minister said roads, traffic, garbage management, drainage and cleanliness would be his priorities.

He said the government would focus on prevention by improving road quality and repairing potholes immediately whenever they appear. Gowda admitted that garbage collection needed improvement but said citizens also cannot dump waste on roads. *—Salar News*

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Mamata moves HC challenging poll result in Bhabanipur

KOLKATA, 16 JUNE

Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday filed an election petition before the Calcutta High Court, challenging the poll result in the Bhabanipur assembly seat, which she lost to BJP's Suvendu Adhikari. Adhikari, who later became the chief minister, defeated Banerjee by a margin of 15,105 votes in the seat.

TMC sources said that Banerjee went to the high court registry to "affirm" the petition challenging the result. The former chief minister did not reply to reporters' questions when she left the high court premises. Counting of votes of the West Bengal assembly election was held on 4 May.

After the saffron party's resounding victory in the West Bengal Assembly polls, Adhikari went on to become the first BJP chief minister of the state. Following her defeat to Adhikari in the 2021 assembly election in Nandigram constituency, Banerjee filed an election petition against the BJP leader. The matter is pending before the Calcutta High Court. The TMC chief had won the Bhabanipur assembly seat in a bypoll in 2021 after party MLA Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay vacated the seat to facilitate her election and retain her position as the chief minister of West Bengal. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

BATTLE FOR LIVELIHOODS

Street vendors and traders protest at KR Market in Bengaluru on Tuesday against the Greater Bengaluru Authority's drive to clear hawkers and implement new parking regulations. This protest comes after many vendors were not allowed to take their vehicles to KR Market. The protesters alleged that removal of shops from footpaths, and barricades around roads were disrupting their businesses *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

Can Aadhaar only be ID proof? SC seeks govt reply

NEW DELHI, 16 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought responses from the Centre and states on a plea alleging that Aadhaar cards were being misused as proof of citizenship, domicile, and residential address, and seeking to restrict their use to identity verification only.

The plea seeks directions to the Centre, states, and the Election Commission to limit Aadhaar's use to identity verification, barring its use as proof of citizenship, domicile, address, or date of birth. A bench issued notices to the Centre and all the states and UTs, tagging them with the pending similar matters.

The plea, filed through advocate Ashwani Dubey, also sought directions that the use of Aadhaar as proof of date of birth and residence in the application form for new voter registration be considered.

The plea alleged that Aadhaar is being used as proof of age, residence and other credentials for services ranging from school admissions and property purchases to voter registration, enabling infiltrators and illegal immigrants to obtain multiple official documents.

The petition contended that the existing verification mechanism is inadequate and might allow individuals without proper supporting documents to be included in the electoral database. The plea sought a comprehensive overhaul of the verification framework used in electoral processes. *—PTI*

GOVT AMENDS RULE

Now, prescription must to buy cough syrups

NEW DELHI, 16 JUNE

Amid growing concerns over drug quality and patient safety, the Union Health Ministry has amended rules to prohibit the sale of syrups, including cough syrups, without a doctor's prescription.

The amendment, notified through the Drugs (Fifth Amendment) Rules, 2026, brings syrup-based formulations under stricter regulatory oversight, officials said.

The ministry said the word "syrup" has been omitted from the relevant entry in Schedule K of the Drugs Rules, 1945. Earlier, Schedule K exempted certain drugs, including cough syrups, from retail sale licensing requirements in villages with populations below 1,000.

"Consequently, the sale and dispensing of cough syrups in smaller villages will now be required to take place only through duly licensed pharmacies in accordance with the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and the Rules framed thereunder," the ministry said.

Schedule K specifies categories of drugs exempt from certain provisions relating to manufacture, sale and distribution, subject to prescribed conditions.

The move comes amid heightened regulatory scrutiny of cough syrups and other liquid oral formulations following reports of contamination-linked deaths of children in several countries. *—PTI*

23 arrested in B'luru in Rs 8 cr drug bust

BENGALURU, 16 JUNE

Twenty-three individuals, including two foreigners, have been arrested for possessing and selling banned narcotics and tobacco products worth Rs 8 crore. The arrests were made by the anti-narcotics squad of the Central Crime Branch during multiple raids across the city. The accused, including six from other states, admitted to purchasing drugs from suppliers outside the state and abroad, then selling them to students and the public for profit. Seized items include 5.3kg of Hydro Ganja, 143gm of cocaine, 10.9kg of ganja, and other banned products such as e-cigarettes and foreign cigarettes. The total value of the contraband is estimated at Rs 8 crore. All suspects are in judicial custody, with police continuing investigations into the suppliers.

—PTI

High Command asked me to take charge: Byre Gowda

Says clarity over BDA is needed for results

BENGALURU, 16 JUNE

Krishna Byre Gowda *—PTI*

Minister Krishna Byre Gowda on Tuesday said he had assumed charge of the Greater Bengaluru Development portfolio and begun work after being directed to do so by Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and the Congress high command, even as he maintained that clarity over his responsibilities was essential.

The minister, who took oath on 3 June, was allotted the Greater Bengaluru Development portfolio but delayed assuming office as Shivakumar retained direct control over two key agencies -- the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) and the Bengaluru Metropolitan Region Development Authority (BMRDA).

Gowda has been entrusted with the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), the city's five corporations, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) and Bengaluru Metro.

He said he had conveyed to the Chief Minister and the party leadership that administrative clarity was necessary to ensure accountability and deliver results. "If we have to work effectively at the ground level, there should be clarity. I have requested the Chief Minister to reconsider, but ultimately it is his discretion," he said.

Gowda recently discussed the issue with Shivakumar and the Congress high command, including party general secretary in-charge of Karnataka Randeep Singh Surjewala, after travelling to New Delhi to seek clarity.

The opposition BJP had targeted the government over the delay in appointing a minister in charge of Bengaluru amid concerns over rains, potholes and civic infrastructure.

The BDA and BMRDA oversee several mega projects, including the Rs 27,000-crore Bengaluru Business Corridor, the Rs 1,200-crore Hebbal short tunnel and the Rs 18,000-crore Bidadi township project. *—PTI*

Lokayukta raids govt officials

BENGALURU, 16 JUNE

The Lokayukta on Tuesday carried out surprise morning raids at multiple locations across the State as part of its crackdown on corruption and disproportionate assets among government officials.

According to a press release, searches were conducted simultaneously at 12 locations by 12 teams targeting officials in Kalaburagi, Chikkamagaluru, Dava nagere, Bidar and other districts.

In Davanagere, a team led by Lokayukta SP MS Kaulapure raided 12 locations linked to three officials. Among them was Siddeshwar Hebbal, Chief Mechanical Engineer of NWKRTC in Hubballi, against whom corruption allegations have been made. Searches at his residence in Anjaneya Layout, Davanagere, and office in Hubballi reportedly led to the recovery of Rs 40 lakh in cash stacked in bundles (**in pic**). Lokayukta officials also searched five properties linked to Krishna Nayak, Secretary of the Bayalu Seeme Development Authority, including his residence in Davanagere and office in Chitradurga.

Simultaneous raids were conducted at five locations associated with Sanna Kenchappa, Superintending Engineer of KRIDL, in Chitradurga, Davanagere and Belagavi. In Kalaburagi and Bidar, a team headed by Lokayukta SP Siddaraju searched five properties belonging to a retired Engineering Superintendent of the Panchayat Raj Department, including residences, commercial complexes and a farmhouse. Documents related to suspected benami assets are under scrutiny. *—Salar News*

State police bust digital arrest gang with Pak links

BENGALURU, 16 JUNE

State police dismantled a cyber fraud gang involved in the "Digital Arrest" scam, arresting three suspects, including the kingpin, and seizing Rs 1,03,142 of the cheated money. Three mobile phones were recovered. On 19 January, a victim lodged a complaint on the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal after losing Rs 15,31,997 to the gang.

The fraudsters, posing as telecom officials, police, and government agents, claimed the victim's bank accounts were linked to illegal activities and pressured him to liquidate investments, transferring funds into various accounts. The scam involved fake RBI receipts, and the money was routed through multiple bank accounts, including Union Bank and Bank of India accounts in the names of Ankit and Aman Kumar. Ankit, arrested in Uttar Pradesh, disclosed working for Mohammad Noor Alam, the gang's kingpin, who was detained in Faridabad. Alam admitted to arranging mule accounts and transferring funds to Pakistan via cryptocurrency. *—ANI*

Cong worker booked for threatening woman

BELAGAVI, 16 JUNE

A case has been registered against Belagavi Congress worker Ayesha Sanadi for allegedly threatening a woman who accused a man of deceiving her with a false promise of marriage. According to the complaint filed by the victim's parents, Badruddin Khilledar of Khanapur allegedly established a physical relationship with the woman after assuring her of marriage but later refused to marry her.The family alleged that Sanadi intervened on Khilledar's behalf and threatened to circulate the woman's private videos on social media if she continued to pursue marriage. They further claimed that the harassment drove the woman to attempt suicide by consuming sleeping pills. *—SALAR NEWS*

'RSS row part of Priyank's 2028 CM strategy'

BENGALURU, 16 JUNE

> **Priyank Kharge and the Home Minister have raised this question within the Constitutional framework. Not respecting the tricolour amounts to an act against the nation... You call it (RSS) the world's largest NGO; then shouldn't you also disclose who its members are**
>
> -BK Hariprasad, KPCC Chief

Senior BJP leader R Ashoka hit out at Karnataka Home Minister Priyank Kharge over the RSS registration issue on Tuesday, claiming that it was his "strategy" to counter Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who is "daydreaming" that he will be the Congress's CM candidate in 2028.

He also hit out at the Congress for raising questions regarding the Sangh's legal status. Terming Kharge's move as a "strategy" to counter Shivakumar, who is "daydreaming" that he alone will be the CM candidate in the 2028 Assembly elections, Ashoka said, "In an attempt to curry favour by appeasing the fake Gandhis in Delhi and become the next CM candidate, Priyank has chosen to make the RSS a bogeyman."

He also called Priyank as the greatest "utter flop" minister in Karnataka's history.

"What moral authority does the Congress have to speak about the RSS when it has formed political alliances for the sake of power with an extremely divisive and anti-national organisation like the Muslim League, which was responsible for partition, and is governing in two states through such alliances?" Ashoka questioned in a post on 'X'.

He said that when anti-national elements openly shouted "Pakistan Zindabad" in front of the Vidhana Soudha, Priyank defended them. "That is Priyank Kharge."

Priyank had sought an explanation from RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on the organisation's legal status.

Ashoka said Priyank had completely "failed" in all responsibilities entrusted to him so far, including the IT-BT portfolio, Rural Development, and as the minister in charge of Kalaburagi district.

Priyank on Tuesday asked the RSS to "shun arrogance," asserting that it cannot exercise "enormous social and political influence" while insisting that it has no political agenda. *— PTI*

COURTESY CALL

Rajya Sabha MP-elect Mansoor Ali Khan met AICC Karnataka in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala on Tuesday. Khan was accompanied by his wife, Tasbia Mansoor Khan, son and Congress leader Mudabbir Khan

Pramod Muthalik booked for hate speech

HUBBALLI, 16 JUNE

Police have registered a suo motu case against six individuals, including Sri Rama Sene chief Pramod Muthalik, at the Hubballi Suburban Police Station for hate speech and related violations. The complaint alleges that during a programme at RN Shetty Kalyana Mantapa, organised by Durga Sene, the women's wing of Sri Rama Sene, the accused displayed iron weapons and distributed trident-shaped weapons to women. The event, named Trishul Deeksha, was reportedly conducted unlawfully without prior permission from authorities. No arrests have been announced yet. *—SALAR NEWS*

4 Dharmasthala SIT officers injured in crash

MANGALURU, 16 JUNE

- The accident occurred on the Charmadi ghat road when the vehicle carrying the officers was travelling from the SIT office in Belthangady to Chikkamagaluru.

Four members of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing allegations of murders, rapes and illegal burials in Dharmasthala were injured after their vehicle overturned in Dakshina Kannada district on Tuesday.

The accident occurred on the Charmadi ghat road when the multi-utility vehicle carrying the officers was travelling from the SIT office in Belthangady to Chikkamagaluru, police said.

The team was on its way to meet Chikkamagaluru Superintendent of Police and Investigating Officer Jitendra Kumar Dayama as part of the probe into allegations of suspicious deaths and illegal burials in the temple town.

According to preliminary information, the vehicle veered off the road, hit an embankment and overturned, causing extensive damage to the car.

All four were rushed to a nearby hospital and are reported to be in a stable condition.

A case has been registered at the Belthangady Traffic Police Station

The SIT was constituted by the state government after a man, later identified as CN Chinnaiah and arrested on charges of perjury, alleged that he had buried several bodies in Dharmasthala over two decades.

Excavations at locations identified by him later led to the discovery of skeletal remains at two sites. *—PTI*

CM urges doctors to work in rural areas

BENGALURU, 16 JUNE

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar at the 28th annual convocation of Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences at GKVK in Bengaluru on Tuesday; Shivakumar meets entrepreneurs' delegation members Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Geetanjali Kirloskar, and others, at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru, Tuesday *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

Stating that doctors are seen as gods by the people, Chief Minister DK Shivakumar today called up on the medical echelon to live up to the expectation of people and work in rural areas.

"You should not focus only on providing healthcare in urban areas. You must also focus on providing healthcare in rural areas," he urged. "The finest doctors and nurses trained here are serving in the health sector across the world."

"Doctors are gods in the eyes of people. People go to doctors with deep faith and trust, you must serve while preserving that faith of theirs," he said while speaking at the 28th Annual Convocation of Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences held at the GKVK campus. He, along with the Governor, conferred degrees on the students.

BIOCON'S SHAW BACKS CM'S B'LURU PLAN

Meanwhile, Biocon founder and Executive Chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw on Tuesday praised Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's vision for State, saying he is committed to transforming Bengaluru into a world-class city and the state into a leading economic hub.

Shivakumar, in a post on X, said a delegation of honorary consuls led by Mazumdar-Shaw met him at Vidhana Soudha to discuss strengthening Karna taka's engagement with the international community and creating new opportunities for investment, innovation and economic growth.

The praise marks a shift from last year, when Mazumdar-Shaw publicly criticised Bengaluru's poor infrastructure and Shivakumar hit back. *—Salar News*

Woman files sexual assault case against Mandya bizman

SIDLAGHATTA, 16 JUNE

A 35-year-old woman has lodged a complaint with Sidlaghatta Rural Police, alleging that Mandya businessman Ramesh, 40, sexually assaulted and blackmailed her over several years. The woman, a homemaker from J Venkatapura village, claimed that Ramesh gained her trust after meeting her at a relative's residence in Bengaluru. She alleges that he sexually assaulted her at his residence and repeatedly exploited her, threatening and blackmailing her. The victim further claimed that the accused extorted over Rs 5 lakh cash and gold worth another Rs 5 lakh. Police confirmed the complaint was filed three days ago; efforts are underway to locate the accused, who is believed to be engaged in business in Mandya district. *—SALAR NEWS*

10,000 PETITIONS SUBMITTED

Farmers protest against river diversion

SIRSI, 16 JUNE

Thousands of farmers, fishermen, environmentalists and residents from across Uttara Kannada district marched to the Assistant Commissioner's office in Sirsi on Monday, demanding the withdrawal of the proposed Bedti–Varada and Aghanashini–Vedavathi river diversion projects.

Under the banner of the Bedti–Aghanashini Basin Conservation Committee, protesters submitted more than 10,000 petitions addressed to Chief Minister DK Shivakumar. They also voiced opposition to the proposed Sharavathi Pumped Storage Project and a nuclear power plant near Sigandur.

In their memorandum, the petitioners said the projects should be abandoned in the interests of farmers, fisherfolk, forest-dependent communities and residents of the district. They argued that the Bedti (Gangavali) river system, including the Pattadakal and Shalmala rivers, flows through one of the most ecologically sensitive regions of the Western Ghats, a globally recognised biodiversity hotspot.

According to the petition, the river diversion projects could cause extensive damage to biodiversity, riverine forests and agricultural land. The signatories warned that reduced downstream water flow would adversely affect drinking water supplies and irrigation, while threatening aquatic ecosystems. They also expressed concern that large-scale interventions in the fragile slopes of the Western Ghats, which are already prone to landslides, could increase the risk of further land degradation and slope failures. Committee president Anant Hegde Ashisara alleged that the Detailed Project Report (DPR) contained exaggerated claims regarding water availability and project benefits.

Ashisara also claimed that the river diversions could displace 3 lakh people in Western Ghats.

Addressing the gathering, Congress MLA Bhimanna Naik said, "The people of Uttara Kannada cannot rest until the State and Central governments formally announce the withdrawal of these projects," he said, adding that he would seek a meeting with. Shivakumar and, if necessary, approach Union ministers. *—Salar News*

Goa govt worker held for poaching in Kali Reserve

UTTARA KANNADA, 16 JUNE

Forest officials in the Kali Tiger Reserve have arrested an employee of Goa's state-run Kadamba Transport Corporation for allegedly hunting wildlife illegally inside the protected forest area.

The accused, Jayendra Digambar Gawde, 45, a mechanic with the transport corporation, was apprehended during a raid conducted by forest personnel in Joida taluk of Uttara Kannada district following specific information about poaching activities.

Officials said four other suspects are absconding, including Subhash Mirashi, believed to be the owner of the firearm used in the hunt, and three other individuals from Goa. A search operation has been launched to trace them.

During the raid, forest officials recovered the carcass of a Palm Civet, a species protected under Schedule II of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Preliminary investigations suggest the animal was shot dead using a firearm.

Authorities also seized meat suspected to be that of an otter and a musk deer. The samples have been sent to a forensic laboratory for scientific examination and species identification. The firearm allegedly used in the poaching has also been seized. *—Salar News*

Phase 1 of Census completed in 23 states, UTs

NEW DELHI, 16 JUNE

Phase one of the 2027 Census - house listing and housing census (HLO) - has been completed in 23 states and Union territories so far, a government statement said Tuesday. "Residents who have completed self-enumeration are requested to keep their generated self-enumeration ID ready and share the same with the enumerator during the field visit to complete the HLO process. Households that have not opted for self-enumeration will be covered during the physical house-to-house visit by enumerators," the statement said. The Rs 11,718 crore Census, eighth since Independence, is being conducted in two phases - the first stage is known as house listing and housing census, the second is population census. The first phase will continue till 30 September. *—PTI*

—WIKIPEDIA

M'rashtra govt starts 'Devabhau,' 'Chhava' taxis

MUMBAI, 16 JUNE

BJP MLC Pravin Darekar announced that the Maharashtra government plans to launch 'Devabhau' and 'Chhava' cooperative taxi services in Mumbai, aimed at reducing aggregator commissions and benefiting drivers and vehicle owners. Modeled on Delhi and Kolkata's 'Bharat Taxi', the initiative seeks to curb high charges by Ola and Uber. Darekar, chairman of Mumbai Bank, stated that the project would benefit drivers directly, with registration underway and 2,000–5,000 vehicles planned initially. However, activists like Anjali Damania criticised the scheme, questioning the use of Mumbai Bank funds and alleging political branding. Congress leader Dhananjay warned about potential conflicts of interest and misuse of depositor funds. *—PTI*

Tamil Nadu CM starts training new MLAs

CHENNAI, 16 JUNE

Tamil Nadu Assembly Speaker JCD Prabhakar lauded Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay, calling his government the "Vijay model" during a two-day workshop for newly elected MLAs. The session, part of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Secretariat's initiative, aims to familiarise legislators with procedures, rules, and effective participation. Prabhakar praised Vijay for maintaining peace and embracing diverse communities, advising first-time MLAs to learn from historical debates involving leaders like CN Annadurai and K Kamaraj. He emphasized the importance of upholding the dignity of the assembly and drawing inspiration from past debates.*—PTI*

2,778 arrested in Keralam's Operation Toofan

THIRU'PURAM, 16 JUNE

Keralam Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala announced that during the first 15 days of 'Operation Toofan', narcotics and banned tobacco products worth over Rs 10 crore were seized, with 2,778 arrests made. The operation, jointly conducted by Kerala Police and the Excise Department, resulted in 2,575 cases. Chennithala highlighted that investigations would target key sources and routes, employing modern technology and a multi-agency digital project. He added that superstar Mohanlal joined the anti-drug campaign as part of the 'Toofan Warriors' initiative, promising continued efforts to eradicate drugs in Keralam. Malayalam superstar Mohanlal has joined the Kerala government's anti-narcotics campaign 'Operation Toofan' as a 'Toofan Warrior'*—PTI*

TVK govt releases white paper on state finances

Govt targets DMK, says TN debt burden is Rs 10 lakh crore

CHENNAI, 16 JUNE

Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Marie Wilson on Tuesday released a white paper on the state's finances, targeting the previous DMK administration for leaving the state with a whopping Rs 10 lakh crore debt burden.

At a presser at the Secretariat, Wilson released the white paper featuring six principal findings and said the stock of outstanding liabilities rose from Rs 5.13 lakh crore on 1 April, 2021, to approximately Rs 10 lakh crore by 31 March, 2026, growing at a compounded annula growth rate (CAGR) of 14.3 per cent — faster than nominal GSDP in most years of the window.

The minister said that the "true" debt burden, by including borrowings of public sector undertakings, is Rs 13.18 lakh crore.

The key findings were these: outstanding debt has almost doubled in five years, interest payments now crowd out investment, the revenue deficit has become structural, the State's own-tax effort has collapsed, committed expenditure has squeezed out development and contingent liabilities take the true debt position far higher than the estimated burden, it said.

The government said this report is not to put blame, "but an analytical statement of fiscal fact."

"Per-capita liability has risen to Rs 1,28,934 — far higher than the peer-group States (Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat). While peer States used the recovery to reduce their Debt-to-GSDP ratio, Tamil Nadu did not."

Underlining that the state's own-tax raising effort has collapsed, the white paper said Revenue Receipts of the state fell from about 10 per cent of GSDP in 2021-22 to 8.32 per cent in 2025-26, and the SoTR-to-GSDP ratio declined from 5.93 per cent to 5.45 per cent, the lowest in the State's recent history.

Leakages, systemic corruption and lack of scientific management in revenue-collecting departments is responsible for the dismal scenario, rather than structural economic disadvantage or lack of financial resources, it said. — PTI

TN Finance Minister N Marie Wilson, centre, Addl. Chief Secretary Siddique, left, release white paper on state's finances in Chennai*—PTI*

CJP won't contest polls: Dipke

NAGPUR, 16 JUNE

Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke on Tuesday said his party was not keen on contesting elections and criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for failing to reach out to students following the NEET-UG fiasco.

Speaking at a press conference in Nagpur ahead of the CJP's protest demanding Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation, Dipke said, "Why should we contest elections? If everyone in this country has to contest elections to demand their rights...how will it work?"

On whether Modi should address the country's youth, Dipke said the prime minister should first apologise to the parents of the five or six students who died by suicide, and that engaging directly with students would help him understand and address their problems.

Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke addresses a press conference in Nagpur in Maharashtra *—PTI*

- The CJP founder was allegedly slapped multiple times by two men during a protest in Jaipur on Monday while supporters carried him on their shoulders. Two youths have been detained in connection with the incident

DIPKE BLAMES RSS

Dipke also alleged that "some people from RSS" were behind an attack on him a day earlier, calling it an attempt to divert attention from the NEET issue and suppress the voices of students.

The CJP founder was allegedly slapped multiple times by two men during a protest in Jaipur on Monday while supporters carried him on their shoulders.

Two youths have been detained in connection with the incident.

Dipke alleged that RSS members were behind the attack, claiming such actions are often used against those who oppose the government or its ideology.

Rejecting suggestions that his alleged RSS ties or meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi justified the assault, he said the attack was aimed at diverting attention from the real issue and silencing students' voices. *—PTI*

NDA MLAs moved to hotel before J'khand RS polls

RANCHI, 16 JUNE

Opposition NDA MLAs in Jharkhand are being moved to a hotel in the city days before the Rajya Sabha elections, a source within the alliance confirmed. Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, Babulal Marandi, said they will hold meetings to plan for the elections on 18 June.

Asked if MLAs would stay at the hotel for two days, he responded, "We will hold meetings." Marandi expressed confidence that the BJP-backed Independent candidate, Parimal Nathwani, would win one of the two seats.

A candidate requires at least 28 first-preference votes to succeed. An NDA legislator stated that the BJP-led alliance doesn't have enough numbers without cross-voting to secure victory. *—PTI*

RSS body calls for US probe into seafarers' killings

NEW DELHI, 16 JUNE

The Swadeshi Jagaran Manch (SJM), an RSS affiliate, has written to the US Ambassador protesting the death of three Indian seafarers in incidents between 8 June and 11 June, linked to US attacks. The organisation demands a transparent investigation and compensation for the victims' families.

In a letter to US Ambassador Sergio Gor on Monday, SJM expressed "deep pain and anguish" over what it describes as the unprovoked killing of unarmed Indian seafarers by US armed forces. "These incidents have sent a wave of disbelief and anger among the people of India.

"The US administration added insult to injury by an insensitive a response, hurting Indian sentiments further, as Indians have always considered the US to be a great friend," said SJM co-convenor Ashwani Mahajan.

He said India reserves the right to raise the issue at the UN and IMO, alleging violations of international law. *—PTI*

'Savarkar filed 10 mercy pleas, but didn't plead with Brits'

PUNE, 16 JUNE

A grandnephew of VD Savarkar acknowledged before a Pune court that the Hindutva ideologue had filed 10 clemency petitions with the British government in which he sought reduction in his sentence. He, however, said their tone was not of humility and they did not have words expressing loyalty to the then rulers.

The grandnephew, Satyaki Savarkar, was being cross-examined by advocate Milind Pawar, appearing for Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in an ongoing criminal defamation case. The case stems from Gandhi's alleged remarks made during a speech in London in March 2023.

Satyaki alleged that Gandhi defamed Vinayak Damodar Savarkar by claiming that the Hindutva ideologue had written in a book that he and five to six friends had assaulted a Muslim youth and derived pleasure from the act. He said no such incident appears in Savarkar's writings.

He also agreed that "filing a mercy petition is an official procedure intended to seek a reduction in the sentence, and Savarkar availed this". Satyaki told the court that while Savarkar filed clemency petitions, their tone was not of humility.

- Satyaki alleged that Gandhi defamed Savarkar by claiming that he had written in a book that he and friends had assaulted a Muslim and enjoyed the act

Satyaki agreed that revolutionaries such as Rajguru, Batukeshwar Dutt and Ashfaqulla Khan did not file clemency petitions, though he added he did not know all names who may have submitted such pleas. *—PTI*

False propaganda, person in video not me: Mann

CHANDIGARH, 16 JUNE

A day after the Sikh clergy declared him 'Guru Dokhi' (anti-Guru) and 'Khalsa Panth virodhi' (anti-Khalsa Panth) over an "objectionable" video, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Tuesday rejected it, saying the person in the video was not him.

In a post on X, Mann said, "The president of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee has openly become a propagandist for the Akali Dal."

The matter stems from the summoning of Mann by the Akal Takht, the highest temporal seat of Sikhs, in January this year for allegedly making comments on 'Guru ki Golak' (gurdwara donation box) and indulging in "objectionable activities" with the pictures of the Sikh Gurus and slain militant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale in a purported video clip.

- Mann said when he was summoned to the Akal Takht he had said that the person in the video does not match his height and physique

Mann said when he was summoned to the Akal Takht earlier, he had said that the person in the purported video does not match his height and physique.

"But I am surprised at how the people sitting at the highest positions of religious bodies are indulging in such false propaganda at the behest of their political bosses," Mann said, alluding to Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargajj.

Gargajj pronounced the edict against Mann from the 'faseel' (podium of the Akal Takht) on Monday in Amritsar. Gargajj claimed that the video circulating on social media was found to be "authentic" by two forensic laboratories. The video was neither tinkered with nor AI-generated, Gargajj said. *—PTI*

BOLD HINDUTVA MOVE

Recitation of Gayatri Mantra, prayers must in Ch'garh schools

RAIPUR, 16 JUNE

The Chhattisgarh government has mandated daily recitation of Gayatri Mantra and other Hindu prayers along with the national anthem and national song across all schools under its education department from 2026-27 academic session.

The direction to conduct a series of daily cultural, educational and value-based activities is aimed at fostering patriotism, promoting students' intellectual development and familiarising them with Indian culture and traditions, officials said on Tuesday.

The new academic session in Chhattisgarh's schools ommenced on Tuesday*—PTI*

> **Why have the Gayatri Mantra, Deep Mantra, Saraswati Mantra and Bhojan Mantra been made mandatory? The government appears determined to turn schools into Saraswati Shishu Mandirs. Imposing the RSS agenda in government schools is wrong**
>
> -Sushil Anand Shukla, Chhattisgarh Congress communication wing chairman

Opposition Congress questioned the need to make recitation of Hindu prayers compulsory in schools as students of other faiths also study there, and accused the BJP government of trying to impose the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)'s agenda in schools. It also demanded withdrawal of the order.

The new academic session in the state commenced from Tuesday. The schools will now conduct mandatory activities at three different times during the day. The morning assembly will include the national anthem, national song, Deep Mantra, Saraswati Vandana, Guru Mantra and readings of biographies of great personalities.

During the mid-day meal, students will recite the Bhojan Mantra), while the closing session will include the state song, Gayatri Mantra and Shanti Mantra. *—PTI*

NCPI PICKS PRESIDENT

NCPI merger may see 22 TMC rebels; Abhishek faces CID

NEW DELHI, 16 JUNE

Rebel Trinamool Congress (TMC) Member of Parliament (MP) Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar on Tuesday said that all the dissident TMC Lok Sabha members would be merging with the little-known Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI) and that their strength could rise from 20 to 22. Earlier, the rebel MPs had said they would later stake claim to be recognised as the "real TMC".

"We will work together with the National Democratic Alliance under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah," Dastidar told reporters.

She added that the dissident MPs have no connection with the TMC Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) who have also broken away from the original party.

The Mamata Banerjee-led faction, however, dismissed the breakaway MPs as a "gaddar (traitor) team" and asserted that the Trinamool remained under the leadership of the former Bengal chief minister.

NCPI PRESIDENT

The NCPI has named Jyotiprakash Chatterji as its new president after the TMC rebel Lok Sabha faction's merger with it, according to Ghosh Dastidar.

This comes a day after founder Shewli Kundu told reporters that she had stepped down as the Nationalist Citizens Party of India chief. However, little is known about Chatterji, much like the party itself.

- The Mamata Banerjee-led faction, however, dismissed the breakaway MPs as a "gaddar (traitor) team" and asserted that the Trinamool Congress remained under the leadership of the former Bengal chief minister

Abhishek Banerjee appears before Bengal CID about his 'inflammatory' statements

Meanwhile, Abhishek Banerjee appeared before officers of the West Bengal Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on Tuesday over his alleged inflammatory statements during the Assembly election campaigning. The First Information Report (FIR) against Banerjee was lodged based on a complaint filed by social activist Rajib Sarkar on 5 May, a day after the assembly election results were declared.

It was alleged that the he made provocative comments on post-poll violence and the vote counting process, a senior officer said. *—PTI*

Sena (UBT) rift buzz gains ground

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, 16 JUNE

The speculation about an imminent rebellion by MPs of Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT), tentatively on a TMC template, strengthened on Tuesday with ruling Sena leader Pratap Sarnaik hinting at welcoming dissidents and giving them "priority".

Eyebrows were raised when Sena (UBT) MP and Uddhav confidant Sanjay Raut travelled to Delhi, sparking a buzz that he might meet Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to preempt any bid by nine party MPs to form a separate group.

Shiv Sena leader and state Transport Minister Sarnaik extended a thinly-veiled invitation: "If public representatives like MPs and MLAs do not trust their leadership...If they believe in the ideals of Sena founder Bal Thackeray and are willing to trust the leadership of Eknath Shinde, then the doors of the Shiv Sena are open to them."

This comes a day after Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Deshmukh met Union minister and Shiv Sena minister Prataprao Jadhav in Delhi. Yavatmal-Washim MP skipped a meeting convened by Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday, citing "family reasons". However, on Monday, he met Prataprao Jadhav.

The defection theory deepened after only four of nine MPs of Sena (UBT) physically attended the meeting. Raut said five others attended the meeting virtually.

On Tuesday, Raut said a "wrong picture was being painted" and asserted all parliamentarians remain with the party. — PTI

—FREEPIK

Lion kills hotel employee in Gujarat's Amreli

AMRELI, 16 JUNE

A lion mauled a 25-year-old restaurant worker to death near Kovaya village in Amreli district, officials said. The victim's severed head and body parts were found close to an approach road early Tuesday morning. Assistant Conservator of Forests Viralsinh Chavda said a pride of four lions was present in the area, and efforts are underway to cage them, suspecting one killed the man. Locals explained the victim left the hotel late at night and was attacked in nearby bushes. Rajula MLA Hira Solanki called for more forest staff to prevent such incidents, which he said are a matter of great sorrow. —*PTI*

Woman gangraped in Ch'garh, minor among 3 held

BALRAMPUR, 16 JUNE

Three suspects, including a minor, allegedly raped a 19-year-old woman in Balrampur district, police said. The incident happened Sunday afternoon in the Kotrahi forest, when the victim was passing with a male relative. The attackers intercepted them on a motorcycle, threatened them, and forced them into the forest, where they tied the relative up and assaulted the woman in front of him. The victim and her relative later reported the crime. Police arrested two men, Suraj Kumar Kushwaha, 30, and Mukesh Kushwaha, 25, and detained a 16-year-old. The suspects are in custody, and further investigation is going on, the police said. —*PTI*

—PTI

Telangana to name Hyd road after Donald Trump

HYDERABAD, 16 JUNE

The Telangana government will unveil a new road named after former US President Donald Trump next week. The 'Donald Trump Avenue' near the American consulate is scheduled to be inaugurated on 23 June. The government announced last December that the road would be named in honour of Trump. Additionally, the upcoming RRR Regional Ring Road will feature a 'Ratan Tata' name, and a stretch called 'Google Street' will recognise Google's global impact. These initiatives aim to position Telangana as a hub for software and technological innovation and development, according to Telangana government sources. —*PTI*

—PIXABAY

UP man kills his father after row over money

KAUSHAMBI, 16 JUNE

A 22-year-old man allegedly shot his father dead over financial issues in Nara village. Ramnaresh Kori, 48, a sanitation worker, was shot twice with a country-made pistol while on his way to work in Manjhanpur. The incident occurred near BP Public School, when Rahul fired at his father's chest and fled. Kori died later at SRN Hospital. The police believe a family dispute over finances was the motive. Rakesh, the elder brother, filed a First Information Report, and Rahul is currently at large. Three police teams are searching for him. —*PTI*

Monsoon lull to last a week, rains by 23 June

Monsoon advancing, but rain-bearing system weak

NEW DELHI, 16 JUNE

Despite the southwest monsoon advancing into more areas, widespread monsoon rainfall is not likely to occur for another week. Weather models have indicated a lull before conditions begin improving around 23 June.

Meteorologists say the monsoon has technically continued its advance across central and eastern India, but the rain-bearing system remains weak. Large-scale monsoon activity is expected to stay mostly inactive between 15 June and 21 June, prolonging the rain shortage that has already hit many regions.

Instead of widespread monsoon showers, much of the rainfall during next week is expected to come from localised thunderstorms, particularly in southern India.

The Karnataka-Andhra Pradesh-Tamil Nadu border region and the Eastern Ghats are likely to witness frequent thunderstorms, bringing moderate to heavy rain.

The subdued phase comes as conditions remain favourable for the monsoon to advance into more areas of Maharashtra, remaining areas of Karnataka, Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar and Chhattisgarh in the next four to five days.

Rain-bearing winds may continue to go northward, but atmospheric conditions needed for widespread rain remain weak—*PTI*

It must be noted that monsoon advance and monsoon activity are not the same. While rain-bearing winds may continue going northward on the map, the atmospheric conditions needed for widespread rain remain weak.

The second half of June, however, could bring a gradual improvement.

Between 22 June and 28 June, thunderstorms are expected to intensify over interior Karnataka, the Andhra Pradesh-Karnataka border, southern Tamil Nadu and Kerala's Western Ghats.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan ordered meetings with district officials, Agriculture Departments, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and other extension agencies in 9-10 states where El Nino's impact is likely to be "severe" during the Kharif season.

Chouhan directed state governments to identify vulnerable districts and prepare crop-wise contingency plans in advance, so that farmers can be provided with options, advice, and assistance in the event of any weather challenge. — *PTI*

El Nino affects global weather

El Niño is a naturally occurring climate phenomenon characterised by the warming of ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific.

This shift disrupts normal atmospheric circulation, impacting global weather, triggering droughts in some regions and heavy rainfall and flooding in others.

As the Pacific Ocean covers one-third of the Earth's surface, these changes disrupt global weather massively

In India, El Niño weakens the monsoon winds, which can lead to less rains, and drought affecting farming and water supplies. —*Agencies*

SECOND CASE IN SIKAR

NEET aspirant kills himself in Rajasthan's Sikar

JAIPUR, 16 JUNE

A A 22-year-old NEET candidate allegedly killed himself in Rajasthan's Sikar city, police said on Tuesday. The deceased has been identified as Umesh Mali, a resident of Kari village in Jhunjhunu district. He had been preparing for the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) staying with his family at a flat on Piprali Road in Sikar, police said.

Mali allegedly hanged himself from a ceiling fan at his residence in Udyog Nagar on Monday.

Udyog Nagar police station SHO Rajesh Kumar Budania said that his family found him hanging when they returned to the flat in the evening and informed the police.

The body was taken to SK Hospital for autopsy. The police requested the hospital to condut the autopsy on camera. The SHO said that Mali was appearing for NEET for the third time and was scheduled to take the examination on 21 June.

His father, Laxmanram Mali, works as a contractor in Mumbai, while Umesh was living in Sikar with his mother, elder sister and brother.

This is the second reported case of a NEET candidate ending his life in Sikar within a month.

- Police said the student hailing from Jhunjhunu was scheduled to appear for the NEET re-test on 21 June, which would have been his third attempt

On May 15, a student from Jhunjhunu district, who was preparing for NEET living in a rented house in the city, allegedly ended his life.

The incident comes ahead of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's interaction with students and youths in Kota on 17 June. — PTI

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support

Woman holidaying with hubby dies mysteriously

DEHRADUN, 16 JUNE

A 27-year-old woman working for an IT firm in Gurugram was found dead at a homestay on Mussoorie-Dhanolti Road, police said on Tuesday. The body was found on the floor without clothes, and bloodstains were seen on the bed sheet.

The deceased was identified as P Radha Gayatri, a resident of Kidwai Nagar East in Delhi.

Police said Gayatri had arrived at the Kiana Homestay Tipridhar late Sunday night with her husband, Soumya Sricharan, also an IT employee in Pune.

On Monday morning, the Mussoorie police received information about an unresponsive woman at the homestay.

An ambulance was rushed, and a pharmacist attached to the ambulance service declared the woman dead.

Inquiry revealed that the couple had come from Delhi to Rishikesh on 13 June, and had checking into a room named 'Bliss' at the homestay at around 11.30 pm.

Sricharan, the husband, told the police that the two had drank alcohol at night and gone to sleep at around 3.30 am.

When he woke up in the morning, he found his wife naked and unresponsive in a puddle of urine with blood oozing from her nose, he claimed. The couple had got married on 8 November 2025, and both belong to Visakhapatnam.

The body was sent to Coronation Hospital in Dehradun for autopsy. The police requested that the autopsy should be conducted under camera. — *PTI*

Keralam sees 146 Shigella cases, 5 deaths

T'PURAM, 16 JUNE

Kerala Health Minister K Muraleedharan said on Tuesday that since January, 146 cases of Shigella were reported in the state and 70 were in June.

Speaking to reporters here after a review meeting, he said that of the five Shigella deaths, one was in March and four in June.

The highest number of cases, 74, of the bacterial infection

from January to June were reported from Kozhikode, followed by Malappuram, 25, including two deaths, and then Thiruvananthapuram with 25 cases of infection, the minister said.

No Shigella cases were reported from Pathanamthitta, Palakkad and Kasaragod districts this year, he said.

Shigella is a bacterial infection that causes diarrhoea, fever and stomach cramps. It spreads mainly through contaminated food or water and through contact with infected persons.

A high-powered committee will be constituted to look into the reasons for the rise in communicable diseases in Kerala and suggest preventive measures, he said. The panel would comprise experts from the Health, Animal Husbandry, Food Safety and Local Self-Government Departments as well as doctors, he added. WHO consultant SS Lal will be the chairperson of the panel. — *PTI*

MP nabs Bihar madrasa operator

BHOPAL, 16 JUNE

The Madhya Pradesh Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) has apprehended a man named Izhar Ulhaq, 56, from Bihar's Madhubani district on Monday.

He operated a madrasa in Bihar in connection with a suspected inter-state radicalisation module, taking the number of individuals held in the case to four, officials said.

Ulhaq was produced before a Madhubani court and is expected to reach Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday on transit remand.

The first arrest in the case was made on Friday when the MP ATS apprehended Bhopal resident Mohd Faraz, 35, from the city's Qazi Camp area.

Subsequently, the ATS arrested two more men allegedly linked to the radicalisation module, Nayeem Abdullah Qureshi, 38, from Nanauta in Uttar Pradesh's Saharanpur district on Friday and Mohd Shakir, 34, from Rajasthan's Alwar district on Sunday. —*PTI*

AI flight returns to Kannur due to engine fault

KANNUR, 16 JUNE

An Air India Express flight bound to Jeddah from Kannur returned within two hours of the flight on Tuesday due to a fault in the engine, airport sources said.

The aircraft with over 180 passengers took off at 7.40 am from Kannur airport, but around two hours into the flight, the pilots saw an engine warning light and decided to return, the sources said. "The flight landed safely in Kannur, and all passengers are fine," they said. A check found that there was something wrong with the fuel filter, they said.

The aircraft circled the airport for some time to reduce fuel before landing, they added. An airline spokesperson said the crew decided to return as a precautionary measure.

"We are arranging another aircraft. Guests have been provided food and hotel accommodation," the spokesperson said. — *PTI*

Vijay waives crop loans up to Rs 75k

CHENNAI, 16 JUNE

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay has announced a full waiver of crop loans upto Rs 75,000 for farmers who borrowed through cooperative banks from 1 May 2025 to 28 February 2026. The move will benefit 14.43 lakh farmers across the state and will involve an additional expenditure of Rs 5,932 crore by the government, offering significant relief to the farming community.

Following a review meeting with ministers and senior officials at the Secretariat, Vijay stated that farmers who had taken loans exceeding Rs 75,000 will receive a waiver of Rs 35,000.

The announcement comes after farmers had petitioned the government following the earlier decision to waive loans up to Rs 50,000 for small and marginal farmers last month. The current announcement revises that figure.

The government release quoted Vijay, saying, "This crop loan waiver will be of great benefit to farmers who wish to obtain loans for the upcoming cultivation season."

It also noted that, according to the Reserve Bank of India's Model Operating Procedures, the government should disburse the entire loan waiver amount within 45 to 60 days after the announcements. — *PTI*

MAN FAKES BOMB ALERT ON TRAIN AFTER FAILING TO GET SEAT

LUCKNOW, 16 JUNE

A passenger allegedly spread a false bomb alert on a train at the Aishbagh station here after he failed to get a seat, triggering panic among commuters and a security check by multiple agencies, police said on Tuesday.

The accused was identified as Saini Jackie, 26, a resident of Telangana, according to the Lucknow Police.

Following the alert, local police, GRP and other security agencies carried out a detailed search of the train.

"No suspicious object or explosive material was found during the checking. The information about the bomb was completely false," police said.

The accused has been taken into custody by the GRP and legal proceedings are underway, officials said. —*PTI*

SPORTING MILESTONE

Smriti only Indian among TIME's 100 top sportspersons

NEW YORK, 16 JUNE

Cricketer Smriti Mandhana has been named by TIME magazine among this year's 100 most influential people in sports, the only Indian on the list.

TIME's list of the 100 Most Influential People in Sports 2026 features athletes, coaches, advocates and investors who are "people shaping sports today."

The list, headlined by American basketball legend LeBron James, includes superstars like football icon Lionel Messi, Chinese-American skier Eileen Gu, tennis star Carlos Alcaraz, basketball player Victor Wembanyama, and legendary golfer Rory McIlroy.

The other big names in the list are football icon Cristiano Ronaldo, South African cricket captain Temba Bavuma, basketball player of New York Knicks Jalen Brunson and FIFA president Gianni Infantino.

Mandhana, 29, the vice-captain of Indian women's team, is part of the elite club.

TIME's profile for Mandhana said that the Mumbai-born left-handed opening batter was the "first Indian woman to score a double century in a domestic one-day game, the first to score a century in all three international formats, and is a joint holder of the most international women's cricket centuries with 17" as it noted that the "records keep tumbling in" for Mandhana.

She is also the first woman to score more than 1,000 one-day international runs in a calendar year.

"She captained the Royal Challengers Bangalore to the 2024 and 2026 Women's Premier League titles and was vice captain for India's triumph at last year's ICC Women's World Cup, scoring the second-most runs in the tournament," TIME said. — *PTI*

10-yr-old boy runs 16 km to his Latur school

LATUR, 16 JUNE

10-year-old Class 4 student Arvind Rathod, who lives in a shelter home called Majha Ghar for underprivileged children in Maharashtra's Latur, celebrated his first day at Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri School by running 16 km to reach there.

The run sent a strong message about physical fitness, discipline and resilience and also served as a reminder to children to spend more time outdoors rather than being glued to mobile phone screens, representatives of the shelter home, run by Manus Pratishthan, said.

The run was flagged off at 8 am in the presence of eminent citizens, social workers and runners.

Sharad Zare of Manus Pratishthan said the initiative was aimed to encourage children to stay away from excessive phone usage and develop an interest in outdoor activities.

The initiative also sought to encourage a balanced lifestyle that combines sports and education, he added.

Arvind, born in a sugarcane workers' settlement, is part of Majha Ghar's mission to educate children from marginalised communities, including migrant labourers, nomadic groups, and suicide-affected farmers. —*PTI*

AIRLIFT TRIAL FOR NEET RE-EXAM PAPER

An Indian Air Force Mi-17 helicopter takes part in a trial run ahead of the NEET-UG re-examination, in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu, on Tuesday. In an unprecedented move, the Air Force will airlift sealed question papers under enhanced security measures for the re-examination scheduled on 21 June. The NEET-UG 2026 examination conducted on 3 May was officially cancelled by the National Testing Agency on 12 May, following a massive multi-state paper leak scandal —PTI

'Blocking Telegram for NEET is band-aid solution'

The Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF) on Tuesday criticised the government's curbs on Telegram and disabling of its message-editing feature ahead of the NEET-UG 2026 re-exam, calling the move a band-aid solution and a "disproportionate" response to exam fraud.

In a statement on X, the digital rights advocacy outfit expressed its objection to the directions announced today in the National Testing Agency's press release.

"Shutting down Telegram is a band aid solution and is a disproportionate answer to exam fraud. On the NTA's recommendation, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has, under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, restricted access to the whole of Telegram in India until 22 June 2026, and has separately ordered the platform to switch off message-editing for every Indian user until 30 June 2026," it said.

"This is a blunt, nationwide measure aimed at the conduct of rampant fraud rackets, and on the government's own admission is constitutionally incompatible," it said.

IFF said Section 69A and the Blocking Rules of 2009 framed under it allow the government to block access to specific "information" on a computer resource and "do not extend to switching off an entire intermediary, still less to ordering a company to redesign its product by removing a feature for a whole country."

"In Shreya Singhal v Union of India, the Supreme Court upheld Section 69A because it is narrow and hedged with procedural safeguards. Reading it to authorise shutting down a platform that lakhs use is an overbroad restriction by the NTAs own admission," the outfit said.

For the message-editing direction, the release identified "no source of power at all". If one exists, the order must say so, it said. IFF argued that the government's own account showed that the block failed the constitutional test of proportionality.

Police detain the members of All India Students' Association (AISA) and Krantikari Yuva Sangathan (KYS) as they protest against the NEET paper leak in New Delhi —ANI

"The release argues against itself. A restriction on access has to be the least intrusive measure that achieves its aim as per the constitutional test of proportionality laid down in Justice KS Puttaswamy v Union of India (2017) and applied in Anuradha Bhasin v Union of India (2020)," it said.

Citing the NTA release, it said the agency's own narration shows the block failed its nodal agency had secured the "prompt take-down of a substantial number of Telegram channels, groups and bots" and that the targeted work "is the reason the harm caused by these rackets has been contained to the extent it has."

"If channel level take-down contained the harm, the case for a blanket block collapses," IFF said, adding that the government has reached for a "heavier tool" while conceding that a lighter one was working.

The statement also referred to the NTA's acknowledgement that the block "affects lakhs of citizens who use the Telegram platform for legitimate personal, educational, professional and informational purposes."

It also flagged the NTA conceding in its release that there is "no such paper available outside the secured examination chain" and that "the security of the examination is unaffected by the action taken."

The organisation said that if the exam is secure and no leak exists, what is being suppressed is rumour, and rumour cannot justify closing a platform when specific blocking and criminal prosecution remain available.

STUDENTS USE TELEGRAM TOO

The organisation said the block came in the final days of NEET preparation, when thousands of students depended on Telegram for study groups, doubt-clearing and shared resources.

"It is important to consider that the source of exam papers leak will occur from inside the system, among insiders and across the printing and logistics chain, with the platform being the most downstream channel for distribution," it said. "Hence, switching off Telegram is merely a deflection from the repeated failures that will continue while media attention is directed towards this Telegram ban," the statement added.

IFF also raised concerns over transparency, saying the MeitY order had not been made public.

"The Anuradha Bhasin decision requires that orders restricting access be published so they can be tested in court. Here the order, and the reasoning of the committee behind it, stay out of view, and we do not know whether Telegram was heard at all," it said.

IFF said app-level blocks usually run through ISP-level DNS and IP filtering and are "over inclusive", sweeping in lawful use while being easy to evade.

IFF asked the government to publish the MeitY Section 69A order and the NTA recommendation behind it revealing the reasoning behind its orders.

"The State cannot switch off a service used by lakhs to answer the wrongdoing of a few, and cannot do it through an order no one affected is allowed to read. On its own facts, the Government has done both," it added. —PTI

LETTERS

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SALAR

Economy in occupied West Bank being dismantled, says report

The economy in the West Bank is teetering toward collapse as Israel maintains a web of restrictions that limit opportunities for Palestinians living under long-term military occupation, according to a new report from a leading conflict tracker.

The International Crisis Group says that Israeli measures restricting movement, withholding revenue and taking land are not only crippling the Palestinian economy but also fuelling deep instability.

"The economic conditions necessary for any Palestinian future other than permanent subjugation are being dismantled," it says.

The report, based on interviews with Palestinian business leaders, mayors and government officials, details the financial crisis afflicting companies, households and the internationally backed Palestinian Authority, which administers cities and towns in the West Bank.

It says Israeli policies suggest a concerted effort to "advance Israel's own declared goal of extending its control and preventing a Palestinian state from emerging."

Throughout decades of military occupation, the Palestinian economy has been hobbled by checkpoints and military gates that curtail the movement of people and goods. Households and businesses have relied heavily on jobs and imports tied to Israel and faced restrictions on land and trade.

The roughly 3.4 million Palestinians living in the West Bank today face roughly 30 per cent unemployment and have seen their economy contract substantially since the start of the Israel-Hamas war.

- The 3.4 million Palestinians living in the West Bank face roughly 30 per cent unemployment and have seen their economy contract substantially since the start of the Israel-Hamas war

After Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack, Israel revoked work permits for most of the nearly 200,000 Palestinians who had worked there previously. Officials cited security but in effect, it deprived the Palestinian economy of nearly USD 400 million a month, or almost one-fourth of its overall economic output. Many businesses today are struggling to pay workers, contractors and suppliers, with private companies seeing an estimated 50 per cent decline in business since before the war, "reflecting tightened movement controls, disrupted supply chains and heightened uncertainty," the report says.

"Palestinian society survives, but in a state of grinding immiseration. Absent remedies, the result will likely be a loss of hope and a growing risk of instability and greater violence," it says.

As the occupied West Bank's largest employer and service provider, the Palestinian Authority is at the heart of the crisis. Government agencies have borrowed heavily to stay afloat as public-sector workers go unpaid and infrastructure such as roads and water lines crumble. The inability to fund to public services is keeping patients out of hospitals and kids out of school.

Most of the PA's money comes from taxes collected on goods entering the West Bank through Israeli ports, because Palestinians do not control their own borders. But under hard-line ministers in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, Israel has withheld billions of dollars in owed tax revenue and unilaterally imposed deductions on the funds. No transfers have been made since May 2025.

Joost Hiltermann, International Crisis Group's special adviser for the Middle East and North Africa, said the world's focus on more than two years of war in Gaza had drawn attention away from the West Bank, but that changes taking place now could have arguably wider consequences for Palestinians' future aspirations.

Hiltermann, who wrote the report, said Israeli officials, who exert considerable control over many of the policies in question, did not agree to be interviewed. But he noted disagreements within Netanyahu's government, with settler leaders and security officials often clashing on how to manage the Palestinian economy.

"The security establishment doesn't want the Palestinian Authority or economy to collapse because they would have to assume the burden of governing the territory in full after essentially destroying it," he said. —PTI

A Palestinian youth saves some belongings from a building that was destroyed in an Israeli airstrike, at al-Maghazi refugee camp, central Gaza Strip —PTI

US no longer land of opportunity for immigrants: Survey

—MAGNIFIC

Many Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) adults have experienced or witnessed a degree of upheaval at the hands of the Trump administration's heightened immigration policies. A new survey by AP-NORC and AAPI Data finds that most AAPI adults no longer consider the US a land of opportunity for immigrants.

The new poll released on Monday supports that immigration concerns are significantly disrupting daily life across AAPI communities in the US. About half of AAPI adults report that they, or someone they know, have faced immigration-related upheavals in the past year.

Many have altered their daily routines, upended travel plans, or started carrying proof of US citizenship or immigration status.

The survey comes more than a year into Trump's immigration crackdowns that are reshaping how some in immigrant-heavy communities view the US itself.

AAPI adults are one of the country's fastest-growing demographics in the US, with most AAPI adults born outside the US.

The survey found that 6 in 10 AAPI adults believe the US used to be a great country for immigrants but is not anymore.

Only about 3 in 10 AAPI adults say America is a great place for immigrants, while 1 in 20 say it has never been a great place for immigrants.

At the same time, AAPI adults are more likely than Americans overall to see the mixing of culture and values from around the world as central to the country's identity.

"America's success story has depended critically on the role of Asian Americans, but also immigrants in general," said Karthick Ramakrishnan, founder and executive director of AAPI Data. "When you have people who are already in this country, have been here for decades saying, 'I'm not really sure that this is the best country anymore,' that's a warning sign."

'BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY'

Even immigrants with legal status have been affected by a major federal policy that would have hiked fees for certain types of visas, but was shot down in federal court this month. Another judge struck down a policy that "categorically barred" immigrants from 39 Asian, African, Latin American and West Asian countries from receiving final decisions on asylum, work permit, green card and citizenship applications.

Khoa Tran, 27, of San Antonio, Texas, came to the US from Vietnam in 2015 at age 15. He gained citizenship four years later. In 2023, he sponsored his wife from Vietnam.

Last year, Tran became concerned when his social media feed kept recommending posts about how even legal immigrants should carry documentation. It had not occurred to the couple that his wife should have her green card with her at all times.

"It seemed like we needed to do it. It's literally become like a second form of identification in addition to the driver's license," Tran said.

Tran said he has seen international students in his community put off visiting family in Asia over concerns about their student visas. "They're just scared. They don't know the law around that," he said. "Better safe than sorry."

- The survey comes more than a year into Trump's immigration crackdowns that are reshaping how some in immigrant-heavy communities view the US itself

CULTURAL IDENTITY OVER AMERICAN IDENTITY

Just over half of AAPI adults state that their family's ancestry or country of origin is central to their identity, compared to 44 per cent who say the same about their American identity.

This trend holds even for those born in the US, with 59 per cent of US-born AAPI adults placing significant importance on their family's heritage, while 47 per cent feel this way about being American.

A separate AP-NORC survey conducted in April found that 55 per cent of US adults say being an American is important to who they are, while only 37 per cent said that about their family's ancestry.

Abigail Jeyaraj, 22, of South Hadley, Massachusetts, was born in Texas. She never takes for granted her Indian parents' decision to build a new life in the US. She identifies not just as "American" but as South Asian American.

AMERICA'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY

The vast majority, 73 per cent, of AAPI adults say that mixing of cultures and values from around the world is "extremely" or "very" important to the US' identity as a nation, compared to only 55 per cent of US adults in the April AP-NORC poll.

Jeyaraj grew up around Dallas and Houston — cities where she was "able to interact with people of so many different races and different cultures that weren't my own." She credits that experience with making her more empathetic.

Restrictions on immigration and diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives leave her feeling conflicted about celebrating the country's 250th anniversary this year. —PTI

Iran says US deal requires Israel to leave Lebanon

Tehran to view any Israeli attacks on Lebanon as a breach of truce

DUBAI, 16 JUNE

Iran on Tuesday said the agreement ending its war with the United States would require Israel to withdraw from southern Lebanon, raising fresh questions over the still-unpublished deal and whether differences over its terms could prolong the conflict.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Israel's continued presence in Lebanon would violate the memorandum of understanding reached with Washington.

"The end of the war in Lebanon is an inseparable part of the complete end of the war," Araghchi told foreign diplomats in Tehran. "Without the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories they occupied during this war, the war has not fully come to an end."

He warned that any further Israeli attacks on Lebanon would be viewed as a breach of the agreement.

The United States has not publicly confirmed whether Lebanon forms part of the final accord. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday that the deal was President Donald Trump's initiative and that Israel would remain in a buffer zone in Lebanon "as long as necessary".

The disagreement echoes earlier ceasefire negotiations that failed to deliver a broader peace.

A ceremonial signing of the agreement is planned for Friday in Geneva. The accord is intended to end a month-long conflict that has killed thousands across the Middle East and triggered a global surge in fuel and food prices.

According to US, Pakistani and regional officials, the deal provides for the immediate reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, lifting of the US blockade on Iranian ports, 60 days of nuclear negotiations, possible sanctions relief and access to frozen Iranian assets. Gulf Arab states are also expected to invest billions of dollars in Iran's economy if Tehran fulfils the agreement's terms. —*PTI*

A village in southern Lebanon is left devastated after Israeli strikes level homes and buildings —*PTI*

US & Russian nuke bombers crash hours apart

WASHINGTON/ MOSCOW, 16 JUNE

Two of the world's most iconic Cold War bombers suffered crashes on Monday, with a US B-52 Stratofortress going down in California and a Russian Tu-22M3 crashing in Siberia.

The US Air Force said a B-52 bomber crashed shortly after take-off from Edwards Air Force Base in California's Mojave Desert during a routine test mission, killing all eight people on board, including military personnel and government contractors.

Aerial footage showed the aircraft reduced to wreckage, with black smoke billowing from the crash site near the runway. Officials said the aircraft was supporting a radar modernisation programme, though it remains unclear whether the upgraded system contributed to the accident.

Aviation safety expert Jeff Guzzetti said the crash's timing suggested a possible flight-control malfunction, engine failure or fault in equipment being tested. Hours later, Russia's Defence Ministry said a Tu-22M3 strategic bomber crashed during a training flight in the Irkutsk region of Siberia. All crew members ejected safely and there were no casualties or damage on the ground. —*Agencies*

If Israel cannot handle Hezbollah, Syria will: Trump

Without me there would be no Israel: Don boasts, says Bibi has to be more responsible

EVIAN-LES-BAINS, 16 JUNE

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday said he had urged Israel to let Syria deal with Hezbollah, arguing that Israeli military operations in Lebanon were causing too many civilian casualties.

"If Israel can't do the job without killing everyone else, then he (Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa) will do the job. Syria will do the job," Trump told reporters on the sidelines of the G7 summit.

Praising Sharaa, a former jihadist who came to power after the fall of Bashar al-Assad, Trump said the Syrian leader was "doing an amazing job" and was firmly opposed to Hezbollah. "He is no boy scout, but he is very good with Hezbollah and does not like them," he said.

Trump said he had advised Israel to allow Syria to take over the fight against the Iran-backed militia. "I think they would do a better job," he said, adding that Israel had been "fighting Hezbollah too long and too many people are being killed".

In unusually blunt remarks about Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Trump said, "Bibi has to be more responsible with respect to Lebanon." He criticised Israel's recent strike on Beirut shortly before the US-Iran agreement was finalised, saying, "I didn't like that, not at all."

He also asserted Washington's importance to Israel, saying: "Without me there would be no Israel, because no other president was willing to do what I did." Trump, however, downplayed the Lebanon conflict, describing it as "the minor war". "Iran's the big one, but we have that little pinprick out there that constantly rears its head, and that's Hezbollah," he said, expressing confidence that the agreement with Tehran would survive despite tensions in Lebanon.

"I think a lot of great things are going to happen in the Middle East right now." He added that oil prices were falling and markets were responding positively to the diplomatic breakthrough. —*Agencies*

Canadian PM Mark Carney, British OM Keir Starmer and US President Donald Trump at G7 summit in Evian-les-Bains, France on Tuesday —*PTI*

G7 scrambles to put Ukraine back atop Trump's agenda

EVIAN-LES-BAINS, 16 JUNE

G7 leaders on Tuesday renewed their backing for Ukraine and discussed tougher sanctions on Russia as President Donald Trump joined a summit session focused on ending Europe's longest war since World War II.

The talks in the French resort town came as European leaders sought to refocus attention on Ukraine after weeks dominated by the conflict involving Iran. French President Emmanuel Macron said he would urge Trump to maintain support for Kyiv and increase pressure on Moscow to secure peace.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said leaders discussed additional sanctions targeting Russia's energy, banking and military sectors. He also said G7 nations backed Ukraine's bid to join the European Union and reaffirmed that all accession negotiation clusters would be opened.

Zelenskyy said he discussed Ukraine's urgent air defence needs, including missile supplies and defence systems, as Russia continues attacks on civilian infrastructure. A French diplomatic source described the talks as "very productive" and said leaders remained united in supporting Kyiv.

Trump joined Zelenskyy and Macron for the closed-door session and is expected to meet the Ukrainian leader separately. The US President said he wanted to focus on Ukraine now that the conflict with Iran was "back in the rearview mirror".

"The whole thing is ridiculous," Trump said of the war. "I'm going to do whatever I can."

Hours before the summit began, Russia launched hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles at major Ukrainian cities, killing at least 11 people and damaging civilian infrastructure.

Meanwhile, Britain announced fresh sanctions targeting Russia's so-called "shadow fleet" used to export oil and gas and the financial networks helping Moscow evade Western restrictions.

Ukraine on Monday formally opened EU membership negotiations, beginning a reform process expected to take | years. —*PTI*

President Donald Trump, French President Emmanuel Macron and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during the G7 summit in Evian-les-Bains, France, on Tuesday —*PTI*

Iran took help from senior psychologists to deal with Trump: Report

A report by Drop Site claimed that Iran allegedly consulted psychiatric professionals to deal with the "erratic behaviour" of US President Donald Trump during negotiations between the two countries. The report said that two professionals helped to assess Trump's mental state and word the messages passed to him by regional mediators during the talks. An Iranian official claimed that the professionals began assisting Iranian negotiators following talks in Islamabad in April, to help with what Iran considers to be "psychopathic behaviour patterns." He also said that Trump's reactions have reportedly improved since the advisors began helping to craft messages.

Chicago consulate gets Vivekananda statue

A life-size statue of Swami Vivekananda was unveiled at the Indian Consulate in Chicago by India's Ambassador to the US, Vinay Mohan Kwatra. Vivekananda, a renowned philosopher known for spreading Vedanta and Yoga, is celebrated in the US for his 1893 speech at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago —*PTI*

Ex-SL president seeks protection from arrest

COLOMBO, 16 JUNE

Former Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa filed a court petition to prevent his arrest over the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks. On 21 April, 2019, nine suicide bombers killed 270 people and injured over 500. Rajapaksa, 77, submitted a writ petition in the Court of Appeal, citing the police chief, CID director, and officer in charge as respondents. His lawyers argued there was a risk of arrest under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Rajapaksa, who served as president until mid-2022, faces a travel ban after the detention of former intelligence chief Suresh Sallay, accused of links with the bombers. —*PTI*

Patients are evacuated outside a local hospital following an earthquake in Palu, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, on Tuesday —*PTI*

6.7 earthquake shakes Indonesia

PALU, 16 JUNE

A 6.7 magnitude earthquake struck central Indonesia's Sulawesi island on Tuesday, causing scattered damage and alarming residents of Palu, a city still traumatised by an 2018 quake and tsunami. The tremor prompted people to evacuate into open areas, with hospitals evacuating patients, some with IV drips, outdoors for safety. Images showed damaged buildings with partially collapsed roofs, shattered walls, and debris strewn across streets.

The National Disaster Management Agency said information on casualties and displaced persons was still being collected. Effendi Natali, a hotel manager, stated, "We have evacuated all guests from the hotel, including several who remained in their rooms. They all panicked, which is natural, but everyone is safe," adding the hotel had only minor damage.

The quake's centre was 43 kilometres east-southeast of Palu, at a depth of 10 kilometres, followed by aftershocks, the strongest measuring 5.2 magnitude. Residents moved away from coastal zones as a precaution against tsunamis, though authorities confirmed no tsunami risk.

Palu residents, haunted by the 2018 disaster, remain cautious, with Muhtar Ahmad saying, "We are still traumatised, so we chose to stay outside because we fear aftershocks." Indonesia's seismic activity is frequent due to multiple fault lines. —*PTI*

- The quake's centre was 43 kilometres east-southeast of Palu, at a depth of 10 kilometres, followed by aftershocks, the strongest measuring 5.2 magnitude.

China, Nepal hold 'comprehensive' talks

BEIJING, 16 JUNE

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his Nepalese counterpart Shisir Khanal held "comprehensive talks" covering the "entire gamut of bilateral ties," said Khanal on X.

Khanal arrived in Beijing on a four-day visit on 14 June after his weeklong trip to India.

China will support Nepal in safeguarding its national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and help its development, Wang said, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a press release on Monday.

China is willing to work with Nepal to jointly advance the 'Belt and Road cooperation', focus on collaboration in power grids, highways, border ports and aviation, Wang said.

China encourages Chinese enterprises to invest and do business in Nepal, and hopes that the Nepali side will provide a more equitable and transparent business environment, he added.

Khanal noted that China has always treated Nepal as an equal and respected its sovereignty and independence, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Nepal remains firmly committed to the one-China policy, supports China's efforts to achieve complete reunification, and will never allow any forces to use Nepal's territory to undermine China's interests, Khanal said.

Khanal's visit to Beijing is regarded as significant as both countries were expected to reset the relations after this year's massive victory of the new Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), ending the prolonged rule of leaders of Nepal's Communist parties, K P Sharma Oli and Prachanda, who sought to move Kathmandu closer to Beijing, away from India. —*PTI*

Nepal's Shisir Khanal with China's Wang Yi —*X/@SHEN_SHIWEI*

UNSC risks failure if only non-permanent expansion: India

UNITED NATIONS, 16 JUNE

India has warned that UN Security Council reform will be "grossly inadequate" and risk "failure" if it only expands the non-permanent category of membership. India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni, voiced these concerns during the Inter-Governmental Negotiations on Monday.

He said, "Expansion limited only to the non-permanent category would not change the decision-making power of the P5." Parvathaneni highlighted that reforms should bring "a greater sense of balance and equity," particularly by reforming the veto powers of the five permanent members: China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US.

He criticised the 'Elements Paper' for not accurately reflecting the support for expansion, especially in the permanent category, and warned that proposals like regional seats do not truly expand the permanent membership. —*PTI*

2 FOUND GUILTY

Moscow's hand suspected behind arson linked to Starmer's homes

LONDON, 16 JUNE

A 21-year-old Ukrainian man called Roman Lavrynovych, alongside his accomplice, was found guilty on Monday of a string of arson attacks targeting a car and two London homes linked to British Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

Lavrynovych was tasked with setting and filming the fires over several days in May 2025, according to evidence presented during his six-week trial.

But the person – or network – behind the online persona of "El Money," Lavrynovych's Russian-speaking handler, has escaped public blame or punishment.

Lavrynovych's lawyer, James Scobie, said he was a "vulnerable, ignorant" puppet in the hands of a serious operator, who was offered large sums for the fires – and threatened if he did not comply.

The plot fits the description of Russian state-backed sabotage, said Cmdr. Dominic Murphy, who has spent two decades investigating such activities. But establishing Moscow's involvement is difficult.

European officials say Moscow is exploiting that space as it carries out a sabotage campaign against European countries that support Ukraine. The Associated Press (AP) has tracked at least 192 attacks across Europe since the 2022 invasion of Ukraine that include arson and cyberattacks as well as attempted assassinations.

European intelligence services say Russia is recruiting people online and paying them relatively small sums of money to carry out sabotage. British intelligence agencies have accused Russia of probing the UK and its European allies with activities just below the threshold of conventional war.

When asked by AP in June if Russia is waging a covert war against the West, President Vladimir Putin brushed the allegations off. —*PTI*

Roman Lavrynovych and Stanislav Carpiuc were found guilty of a string of arson attacks targeting UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer's home

PHOTO: WIKI

Star Air starts B'luru-Mundra direct flights

BENGALURU, 16 JUNE

Star Air has announced the launch of scheduled commercial services to Mundra in Gujarat, its 32nd destination. Operations are set tp begin on 23 June, connecting Mundra with Mumbai, Hindon, Goa, Surat, Belagavi, Bengaluru, Kolhapur and Nanded. The airline will operate five weekly flights between Mumbai and Mundra. Additionally, three weekly flights will link Mundra with Hindon. Captain Simran Singh Tiwana, CEO of Star Air, stated, "Every new destination added to our network reflects our belief that enhanced connectivity can unlock opportunities and drive inclusive growth." He highlighted Mundra's significance as India's largest private port and Star Air's commitment to greater regional connectivity. *—PTI*

Rupee rises 5P to close at 94.53

MUMBAI, 16 JUNE

The rupee appreciated for the third straight session on Tuesday to close 5 paise higher at 94.53, supported by easing West Asia tensions and an extended fall in crude oil prices. The rupee opened at 94.69 against the US dollar and traded in the range of 94.48-94.71. Eventually, it settled at 94.53 (provisional), up 5 paise from its previous close. Forex traders said that with the reported de-escalation of the US-Iran conflict and diplomatic agreements regarding the Strait of Hormuz, the immediate threat to global energy supplies has significantly reduced. Moreover, softening of the US dollar and a decline in US treasury yields also supported the USD/INR pair, they said. *—PTI*

Gold falls Rs 200 while silver stays unchanged

NEW DELHI, 16 JUNE

Gold prices declined marginally by Rs 200 in the capital on Tuesday, while silver prices remained steady amid subdued local demand. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity fell to Rs 1,59,200 per 10 grams from Rs 1,59,400 on Monday, inclusive of all taxes. Meanwhile, silver stayed unchanged, sticking to Rs 2,60,700 per kilogram. Analysts attributed the decline to easing geopolitical tensions that boosted domestic equity markets and supported the rupee, prompting investors to shift away from precious metals. However, firm global trends limited losses locally, as overseas bullion prices rose on easing inflation concerns. Spot gold and silver traded nearly 1 per cent higher at USD 4,344.36 and USD 70.43 per ounce respectively. Market particapantsare monitoring developments in the ongoing US-Iran dea. *—PTI*

TCS to take $70M hit as US Court rejects appeal

Court declined TCS' appeal in a trade secrets dispute case

NEW DELHI, 16 JUNE

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Tuesday said it would make provision of an additional USD 70 million in the first quarter of fiscal 2027 after the US Supreme Court declined to review a lower court ruling in a legal dispute with Computer Sciences Corporation, now part of DXC Technology.

TCS, in the BSE filing, said it has already provided USD 150 million for the matter in its books of accounts in accordance with applicable accounting standards.

The company "will make necessary provision now for the incremental amount of USD 70 million towards damages, interest and legal cost, as a one-time exceptional expense, in Q1 FY2027".

TCS had disclosed the litigation in earlier exchange filings in June 2024 and November 2025.

Providing an update on the suit filed by Computer Sciences Corporation/DXC Technology Company, TCS, on Tuesday, informed that the US Supreme Court has declined to review a lower court ruling in a lawsuit brought by Computer Sciences Corporation.

Tata Consultancy Services said it has already provided USD 150 million for the matter *—ANI*

"In continuation of our earlier communication...dated 14 June,2024 and...dated 22 November 2025, we wish to inform you that the US Supreme Court has denied our petition for a writ of certiorari to review the judgment of the US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit on 15 June," it said.

Earlier, TCS had faced a legal setback after the US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit upheld a USD 194.2 million damages award and ruled in favour of Computer Sciences Corporation in a years-long trade secrets case.

- The United States Supreme Court has declined to review a lower court ruling in a lawsuit brought by Computer Sciences Corp now part of DXC Technology.

In June 2024, TCS informed BSE that a US District Court in Texas had found it liable for USD 56.1 million in compensatory damages, USD 112.3 million in exemplary damages, and USD 25.7 million in prejudgment interest in a trade secrets suit filed by CSC/DXC Technology. The company called the ruling adverse but said it intended to appeal.

In November 2025, the Fifth Circuit upheld the damages award but vacated a previously granted injunction, directing the District Court to reassess it. TCS said it was evaluating further options and would make necessary provisions in accordance with applicable accounting standards. *—PTI*

ATF UP BY RS 12.5/LITRE

Govt hikes export duty on diesel to Rs 14/litre

NEW DELHI, JUNE 16

The Central government on Monday hiked the export duties levied on diesel by Rs 14 per litre and Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) by Rs 12.5 per litre, with no change in the rates of duty on petrol, according to the official Gazette notification issued by the Department of Revenue. There is no change in the existing excise duty rates on petrol and diesel cleared for domestic consumption, either.

The revised rates will come into effect on Tuesday.

Export levies, Special Additional Excise Duty (SAED) and Road and Infrastructure Cess (RIC), on the exports of petrol, diesel and aviation turbine fuel (ATF) were introduced with effect from 27 March to ensure domestic availability of petroleum products by disincentivising exports in the backdrop of the West Asia crisis.

The rates are being revised on a fortnightly basis, and the last such revision was undertaken with effect from 1 June. The rates are prescribed based on the average international prices of crude oil, petrol, diesel and ATF prevailing during the period since the last review.

Meanwhile, the Petroleum Ministry on Monday has assured there is sufficient supply of petrol, diesel, LPG and natural gas in the country and urged citizens and industry to use energy responsibly.

Joint Secretary Sujata Sharma, speaking at an Inter-Ministerial press briefing, appealed for energy conservation and asked bulk industrial and commercial consumers to purchase diesel from their consumer pumps to reduce pressure on retail outlets. *—ANI*

Markets extend winning run to 3rd day; Sensex up 544 pts

MUMBAI, 16 JUNE

Sensex and Nifty rose for the third consecutive day on Tuesday, propelled by a positive trend in global markets and softening crude oil prices following a peace deal between the US and Iran.

BSE Sensex jumped 544.15 points (+0.71 per cent) to 76,808.48 following gains in IT, select energy and banking stocks. Intraday, it surged 582.41 points (+0.76 per cent) to 76,846.74.

NSE Nifty climbed 135.25 points (+0.57 per cent) to end at 23,989.15. During the day, it jumped 148.7 points, or 0.62 per cent, to 24,002.60.

Foreign investors turning net buyers in Indian equities also boosted the sentiment, according to experts.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Monday, purchasing equities worth Rs 200.05 crore on net basis while Brent crude traded 2 per cent lower at USD 81.45 per barrel.

Among the 30 Sensex firms, HCL Tech rose the most by 3.59 per cent a day after the IT major announced a Rs 1,427 crore investment in government-backed sovereign AI model developer Sarvam AI for a 10.46 per cent stake.

The US and Iran reached an agreement on Sunday to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a move expected to facilitate the resumption of oil and natural gas shipments.

Iran has indicated implementation will begin only after a formal signing ceremony, said to be scheduled in Switzerland on Friday.

In three straight sessions, Sensex jumped 2,975.93 points, or 4 per cent, and the Nifty climbed 827.55 points, or 3.57 per cent. *—PTI*

Services sector share in exports jump to 49 pc

NEW DELHI, 16 JUNE

India's services sector share of total exports rose from 33.8 per cent in 2014-15 to 48.8 per cent in 2025-26, driven by IT expansion, global capability centres (GCCs) growth, and a post-pandemic shift to digital delivery.

According to the commerce ministry data, the exports surged from USD 158.1 billion in 2014-15 to USD 421.3 billion in 2025-26.

The country's total exports (goods and services together) increased from USD 468 billion in 2014-15 to USD 863 billion in 2025-26, the data showed.

Over the last 12 years, the services exports recorded robust growth since 2014-15, except in 2020-21 when they were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Software services, accoun for 40 per cent of services exports. Professional and management consulting emerged as the second-largest.

"Services exports grew with a Compound Annual Growth Rate of 9.3 per cent in the last 12 years," the ministry said.

Goods shipments too surged from USD 310 billion in 2014-15 to USD 442 billion in 2025-26.

Measures taken by the government includes simplification of 47 processes; automated FTP processes; auto-validated Importer Exporter Code issuance; and launch of export promotion mission, said the ministry. *—PTI*

India's 5G users to hit 1.1B by 2031, says Ericsson

NEW DELHI, 16 JUNE

India's 5G subscriptions are projected to surpass 1.1 billion by 2031, representing 81 per cent of total subscriptions, according to a report by Swedish telecom equipment manufacturer Ericsson. By the end of 2025, 5G subscriptions reached 430 million, accounting for 35 per cent of all mobile subscriptions, the Ericsson Mobility report stated. India leads globally in mobile data consumption per smartphone, with an average monthly usage of 37GB expected to nearly double to 70GB by 2031.

Rapid adoption is driven by affordable 5G devices, extensive network coverage, and the increasing rollout of Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) services. Uplink traffic is growing faster than downlink for many providers, sometimes significantly. While 4G remains dominant at 46 per cent, subscriptions are forecast to decline from 570 million in 2025 to 160 million by 2031, as users migrate to 5G.

Nitin Bansal, MD of Ericsson India, highlighted India's robust 5G infrastructure, which is fostering inclusion, governance, and innovation. Globally, 5G subscriptions reached 3.1 billion in Q1 2026, forecast to double to 6.4 billion by 2031, with 48 per cent of mobile data traffic handled by 5G at the end of 2025. *—PTI*

India's trade deficit at $28.21B in May: Report

NEW DELHI, 16 JUNE

While India's trade deficit widened to USD 28.21 billion in May 2026, lower crude oil prices and higher duties on gold imports will likely ease pressure on the import bill and trade deficit as per a report by Dolat Capital.

The report noted that India's petroleum imports surged sharply to USD 22.7 billion in May-26 from USD 14.0 billion a year ago.

Meanwhile non-petroleum exports increased to USD 70.7 billion during April-May FY27 from USD 64.0 billion in the corresponding period last year.

As per Dolat Capital, export growth is becoming more broad-based across products and markets, reducing reliance on a few commodity segments.

At the same time, deeper trade ties with Asia, West Asia, Africa, and other emerging regions point to greater geopolitical diversification, lowering concentration risks and strengthening resilience against regional shocks and supply chain disruptions.

As per the report, "softer crude oil prices amid easing geopolitical tensions in West Asia could lower the oil import bill and help narrow the trade deficit." *—ANI*

Non-leather footwear MSEs get extra year for quality norms

NEW DELHI, 16 JUNE

The government has extended the deadline by one year, until 31 July 2027, for micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in the non-leather footwear sector to comply with the mandatory quality control order.

The extension allows smaller manufacturers more time to secure BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) certification.

It also permits footwear importers to bring in up to 4,500 pairs annually for research, design, testing, and other non-commercial purposes without meeting QCO requirements. These imported shoes must be marked "NOT FOR SALE" and disposed of as scrap.

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) stated that the exemption is expected to help Indian manufacturers access global samples and speed up product innovation.

The government has extended the deadline that allows smaller manufacturers time to secure Indian Standards certification *—FREEPIK*

The amendment, however, applies only to footwear made from rubber and polymeric materials, while leather footwear remains under separate BIS regulations.

India's FY2026 footwear imports totalled USD 628.8 million, mainly from Vietnam, China, Bangladesh, Indonesia, as well as Thailand. *—PTI*

ENERGY CRISIS

'Iran war is a wake-up call for SE Asia'

BANGKOK, 16 JUNE

The war in Iran has exposed major risks for Southeast Asia that could cost the region many billions of dollars if it does not diversify its energy sources, with its energy import bill potentially tripling to USD 245 billion by 2035 from USD 80 billion in 2024.

An International Energy Agency report released on Tuesday states that an over-reliance on oil and gas transported through the Strait of Hormuz left the region particularly vulnerable to shocks from the Iran war, a "stark wake-up call" for its energy security, and a need to accelerate structural change, the report also stated.

The energy shock pushed Southeast Asia into crisis mode, driving up energy bills and inflation. The conflict has also reinforced dependence on coal during supply disruptions — a likely setback for the region's fossil fuel phase-out goals, the IEA said.

"Diversification of energy sources and supply routes is now a central priority," said Fatih Birol, the IEA executive director.

But more sweeping reforms are needed. To overcome its weaknesses, Southeast Asia needs to reduce its overall demand for imported fossil fuels, the IEA said.

It suggests making national grids more efficient and boosting investment in all forms of renewable energy, such as solar, wind, hydro and geothermal power.

The report notes that the rising sales of electric vehicles, a renewed interest in nuclear power and a boom in rooftop solar and other renewable energy installations show the war is spurring change. *—PTI*

Adani Ports to invest $100M with US' Kaleris for automation

NEW DELHI, 16 JUNE

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) has announced the expansion of its strategic partnership with US-based software firm Kaleris, committing up to USD 100 million in two phases to boost automation and optimisation. This investment forms part of APSEZ's broader USD 850 million plan for technology and decarbonisation under its 2031 vision.

Building on Phase 1 deployments at six ports, the company will now extend advanced operational, optimisation, and automation capabilities across its maritime and logistics network. Under the multi-year agreement, Kaleris will deploy its terminal operating system along with AI-augmented container handling solutions across 15 APSEZ container terminals at nine ports.

The USD 100 million investment in two phases to boost automation and optimisation *—ADANIPORT*

The deployment aims to improve efficiency, delivering up to 20 per cent better productivity in Rubber Tyred Gantry cranes and 14 per cent in terminal trucks. APSEZ CEO Ashwani Gupta highlighted that AI-enabled automation will drive future competitiveness, while Kaleris President Kirk Knauff emphasised the trust in the partnership's results. *—PTI*

'The whole planet' awaits Messi's 200th cap as Argentina plays Algeria

KANSAS CITY, 16 JUNE

Lionel Scaloni tends to be pensive about a lot of things, but especially when the subject turns to another Lionel — a much more famous one, arguably the most famous athlete in the world, and one the Argentina coach gets to see on a daily basis.

"Not only the Argentinian population but everybody — the whole planet — wants to see him play," Scaloni says. "Everybody wants to see him on the pitch, because he has an effect not only on Argentina fans but supporters all over the world."

Those supporters will likely get their last chance to see Messi wearing his light blue striped shirt at the World Cup beginning Tuesday night, when the defending champions open their tournament against Algeria at Kansas City's Arrowhead Stadium.

> "Everybody wants to see him (Lionel Messi) on the pitch, because he has an effect not only on Argentina fans but supporters all over the world," Lionel Scaloni says

Messi had been dealing with a minor hamstring issue in the lead-up to the World Cup, but he's looked comfortable in the rare moments later on a penalty kick and played 20 minutes without any problems.

However, the World Cup won't be decided in the opening match of the tournament, Scaloni says.

But that also doesn't mean the chances reporters have witnessed training. And in last week's final tuneup against Iceland at Auburn's Jordan-Hare Stadium, he came into the game as a second-half substitute, scored reigning champions want to begin like they did in Qatar, when they were stunned by Saudi Arabia in their opener in group play. Argentina rebounded to beat Poland and Mexico, beat the Netherlands in a quarterfinal shootout, and ultimately topped France in another shootout to win its third world title.

"We've had the experience of the last World Cup," Scaloni said Monday, the day before Argentina opens the 2026 edition against Algeria, "so this first match is not critical. I mean, it's important, but it doesn't end in the first match."

Only twice has a country defended its World Cup title: Italy in 1938 and Brazil in 1962. —*PTI*

Iran opens 'politically charged' game with draw

INGLEWOOD, 16 JUNE

Iran opened its politically charged World Cup by playing to a 2-2 draw with New Zealand on Monday night, overcoming two deficits and getting the tying goal from Mohammad Mohebbi in the 64th minute.

Ramin Rezaeian scored an early goal and assisted on Mohebbi's goal for the Iranians, whose World Cup cycle has been in upheaval since the US and Israel began a war against Iran on 28 February. Iran ultimately decided to compete even after FIFA rejected its request to move its three group-stage matches out of the US.

Iran moved its training base during the tournament from Arizona to Tijuana, Mexico, and the team is flying into the US on the day before each game before returning quickly to Mexico. Captain Mehdi Taremi acknowledged that this World Cup has been a difficult experience containing little of the joy that soccer represents to him and his teammates.

Team Melli began the tournament before a strong pro-Iranian crowd at SoFi Stadium near Los Angeles, which has the world's largest population of Iranians outside Iran. While several hundred Iranian Americans protested the government outside, many fans from the diaspora jeered and turned their backs on the field during the national anthem — but almost all appeared to support the Iranian players once the match kicked off.

Iran's Ali Nemati battles for the ball with New Zealand's Chris Wood —*PTI*

Elijah Just scored early in each half for New Zealand, but Iran responded twice to keep the All Whites winless in their World Cup history. New Zealand still matched its entire goal total from each of its two previous World Cup runs while posting an impressive result against a team ranked 65 places higher by FIFA.

Players from both teams embraced and shook hands after the final whistle, with at least one jersey swap occurring. While Iran coach Amir Ghalenoei sat by himself in the dugout, his players gathered together and walked around the field applauding their thousands of flag-waving, roaring fans.

Iran is ranked 20th in its seventh World Cup appearance, including four straight. Team Melli has never advanced from the group stage. —*PTI*

Senegal looks to repeat 2002 WC upset of France

France's last World Cup match against Senegal set off dancing in the streets of Dakar.

Les Bleus were the defending champions when the Lions of Teranga's 1-0 upset win in the 2002 opener caused Senegal President Abdoulaye Wade to declare a national holiday.

"Not for revenge do we want to win, but we want to go as far as possible in this competition," France midfielder N'Golo Kanté said through a translator on Monday, a day before Les Bleus and Senegal meet in Group I. Senegal was a French colony before 1960.

France is a two-time champion seeking to reach its third straight World Cup final. Les Blues won in 1998 and 2018, then lost the 2022 final to Argentina on penalty kicks.

The French team is ranked third in the world, while Senegal is 16th.

"Our main opponent is ourselves," Kanté said. "We cannot see ourselves too beautiful or too strong."

Thiaw was picked for Senegal's 2002 roster but played in only one game, the round of 16 win over Sweden. He will pass along lessons learned from the late Bruno Metsu, Senegal's 2002 coach. —*PTI*

Uruguay's Maxi Araujo scores equaliser 1-1 with Saudi Arabia

MIAMI GARDENS, 16 JUNE

Abdulelah Al-Amri scored on a rebound in the 41st minute for Saudi Arabia, and Uruguay's Maxi Araújo responded with an equaliser in the 80th as the teams played to a 1-1 draw in their World Cup opener on Monday.

Uruguay controlled most of the second half but didn't break through until Araújo fired a rebound past goalkeeper Mohammed Al-Owais from close range. La Celeste dominated possession and had 28 attempts on goal to Saudi Arabia's seven but trailed until late in the second half.

It was the fourth international goal for Araújo and second at Hard Rock Stadium, home to the NFL's Miami Dolphins.

Al-Amri, who had a shot denied by Uruguay's Fernando Muslera earlier in the first half, put his squad ahead with a quick tap-in after Muslera palmed away a header.

Al-Amri fell to his knees after the goal and placed his head down on the pitch as he was showered with cheers from Saudi Arabia fans, who were greatly outnumbered in South Florida but loud enough to make up the difference.

Four years ago, they watched their team deliver one of the most memorable moments of the 2022 World Cup, coming back to stun Lionel Messi and eventual champion Argentina 2-1 in Saudi Arabia's opening match.

Monday's result was much less dramatic, but Saudi Arabia — behind a mostly solid performance by Al-Owais — was able to shut out Uruguay, a two-time World Cup champion, until late. —*PTI*

FIFA World Cup 2026 - Group H - Saudi Arabia v Uruguay - Miami Stadium, Miami Gardens, Florida —*ANI*

CAPE VERDE'S 40-YEAR-OLD VOZINHA MAKES HIT DEBUT

ATLANTA, 16 JUNE

It took Cape Verde goalkeeper Vozinha all of his 40 years on Earth to make his World Cup debut. The long, long wait was worth every fleeting second.

Vozinha recorded seven saves on Monday, holding Spain's star-studded lineup to a shocking 0-0 draw. The keeper was everywhere as the Spanish team and its fans became frustrated, despite unleashing 27 shots. Not even the second-half entrance of young superstar Lamine Yamal could crack the code to get past Vozinha and the Cape Verde defense.

Cape Verde, in its first World Cup match, scored against Spain, the 2010 champion. An emotional Vozinha said he missed his loved ones: his late grandparents who raised him, and his mother, who could not gather the money in time to get a visa for US.

BELGIUM SETTLES FOR 1-1 DRAW WITH EGYPT

SEATTLE, 16 JUNE

Romelu Lukaku's entrance as a second-half substitute drew a standing ovation from the smattering of Belgium supporters. It took only 23 seconds to turn those hopeful cheers into raptures of euphoria.

Lukaku's presence sparked an immediate attack that led to Belgium's lone goal against Egypt on Monday, helping to earn a 1-1 draw in the team's opening World Cup match.

Lukaku, a Napoli striker, withdrew from Belgium's friendlies in the US to get fitter as he continues to recover from a hamstring injury.

That injury didn't look too bothersome in the 66th minute when he ran down the middle of the field moments after entering the game and lurched to tap a cross from the right into the net. Egypt defender Mohamed Hany evened the score. —*PTI*

NORWAY TEAM'S VIKING THEME SPARKS DEBATE

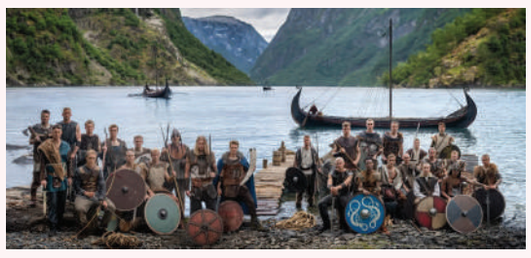
FOXBOROUGH, 16 JUNE

First it was their fans performing a synchronized "Viking row" in the stands at matches.

Then it was their players donning authentic Viking attire, complete with weapons, shields and long boats, to the backdrop of a fjord for a moody, dramatic photo shoot. It has created plenty of excitement and debate.

One commentator, Markus Slettholm from daily paper Morgenbladet, said the photo was chauvinistic and "a bit reminiscent of what neo-Nazis were concerned with 10 years ago." "There are many bigger and more difficult topics," Norway manager Stale Solbakken said, "I can't afford to waste time on that."

"It was an ask or a question from the (photographers). The players wanted me to do it. They were positive. The federation was positive. And I was average positive. And then we did it." —*PTI*



TWITCH RESPONSIBLE FOR SUPREMACIST SIGN: OFFICIAL

GENEVA, 16 JUNE

A World Cup video review official said his hand gesture resembling a white supremacist sign was caused by an involuntary twitch, and a FIFA panel concluded the Australian didn't breach the sport's disciplinary code. sFIFA's discrimination monitor had called for Shaun Evans to be removed.

Evans worked Germany's opening 7-1 win over Curaçao on Sunday. Evans made an "OK" symbol with his right hand in front of his right leg. "I did not intentionally make a hand gesture or symbol to communicate a message," Evans stated. "The movement was an involuntary, subconscious twitch and I was unaware I had done it at the time." In 2019, the gesture — with thumb and forefinger touching in a circle and other fingers outstretched — was designated a hate symbol by New York-based Anti-Defamation League.

Senthilkumar & Abhay look to extend dominance

CHENNAI, 16 JUNE

Abhay Singh and Velavan Senthilkumar will look to extend their dominance when the pair begins its campaign in the 3rd Asian Doubles Squash Championships, beginning in Malaysia, on Thursday. They have been given top billing in Pool A, while compatriots Rahul Baitha and Suraj Kumar Chand are seeded eighth and feature in Pool B. Last year, Abhay partnered the young Anahat Singh to win the mixed crown. Anahat then clinched the top honours in the women's doubles, partnering Joshna Chinappa. However, Anahat will not compete in Malaysia this week, as she is preparing for the World Junior Championships in Canada next month. —*PTI*

India seek sharper batting vs Netherlands

LEEDS, 16 JUNE

India will aim to put an improved performance with the bat when they face Netherlands in their second group game of the Women's T20 World Cup here on Wednesday.

Smriti Mandhana at the top and Richa Ghosh in the lower order made the difference with the bat in the opener against Pakistan. The rest of the batting line-up, including opener Shafali Verma and Harmanpreet Kaur, could not come to the party.

Bharti Fulmali plays a crucial role in the middle-order but she had a forgettable first outing in the ICC event.

More consistency is needed from the Indian batters for the tougher battles ahead in the league stage.

The Netherlands game should be cakewalk but India would need to beat either Australia or South Africa in the league stage to qualify for the semifinals. The fielding against Pakistan was not up to the mark, to start with, but some good catches were taken later in the innings.

Netherlands, on the other hand, come into the game following a loss to Bangladesh. They would need improvement in all departments to challenge India.

"I think in all three aspects of the game, it wasn't quite the fire we hoped for. With the bat, I think we were a few runs short. We never really got going. We lost a bit too many wickets on the way."

"I think in the field as well, Bangladesh got off to a flier. The fielding, we dropped a few catches in the innings. So I think a lot to learn, a lot to improve from a great experience overall," said captain Babette de Leede after the opening loss. —*PTI*

FIH Nations Cup: India women beat Japan 2-1

AUCKLAND, 16 JUNE

The Indian women's hockey team booked its place in the semifinals of the FIH Nations Cup after defeating Japan 2-1, with goals from captain Salima Tete and Lalremsiami proving decisive here on Tuesday.

This was India's second win of the tournament, which serves as a qualifying event for next year's FIH Pro League. The victory took their tally to six points, securing a place in the last four.

India opened the scoring in the third quarter, with Salima Tete finding the net in the 33rd minute after the forwards had made several unsuccessful attempts.

Japan responded quickly, drawing level just two minutes later through Ai Hiramitsu.

However, Lalremsiami struck the decisive goal in the 49th minute as India withstood a late Japanese surge to secure the victory. —*PTI*